The Small World of Jane Jacobs ROBERT M. SOLOW

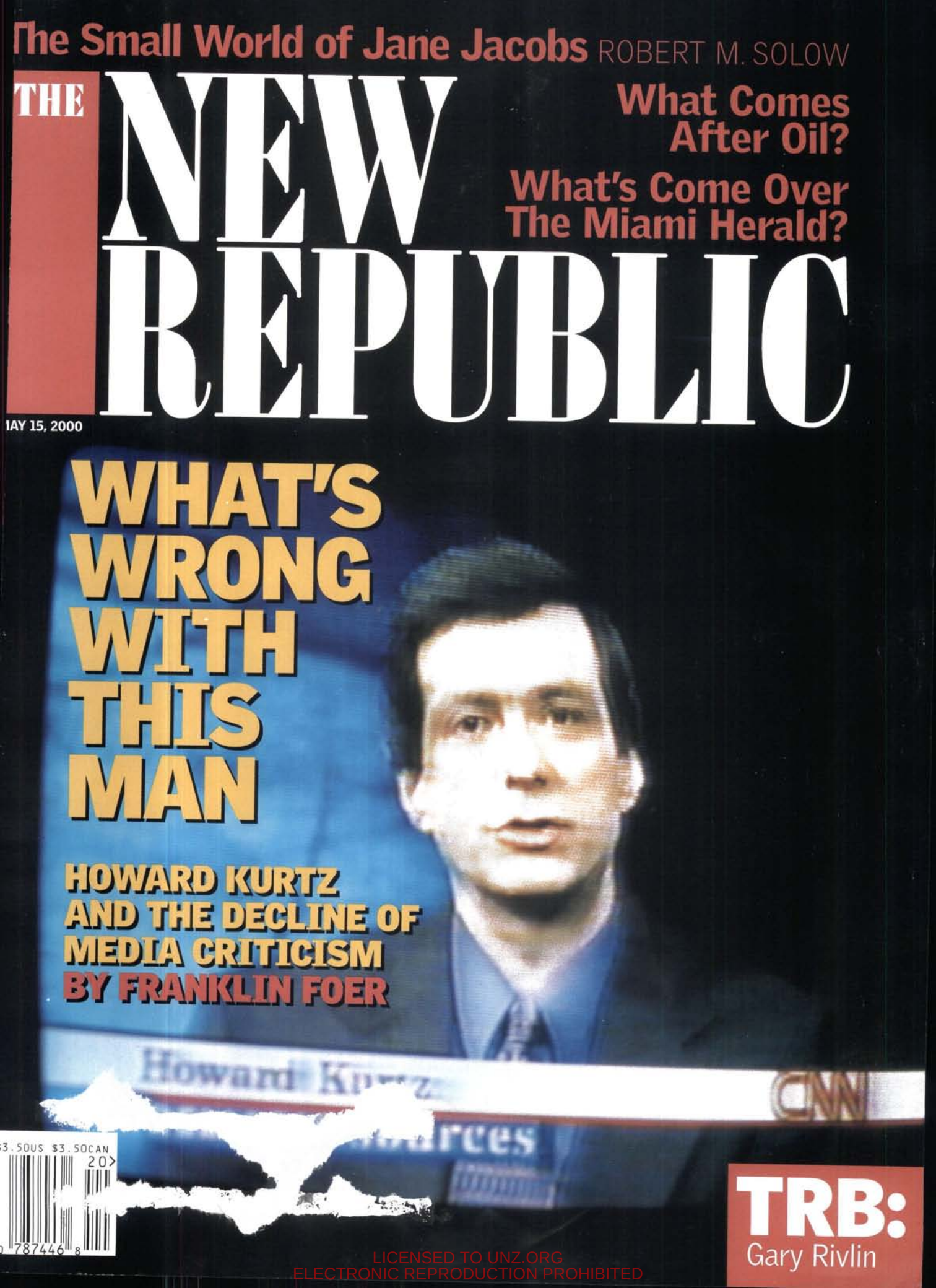
THE NEW REPUBLIC

What Comes After Oil?

What's Come Over The Miami Herald?

MAY 15, 2000

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS MAN



HOWARD KURTZ AND THE DECLINE OF MEDIA CRITICISM BY FRANKLIN FOER

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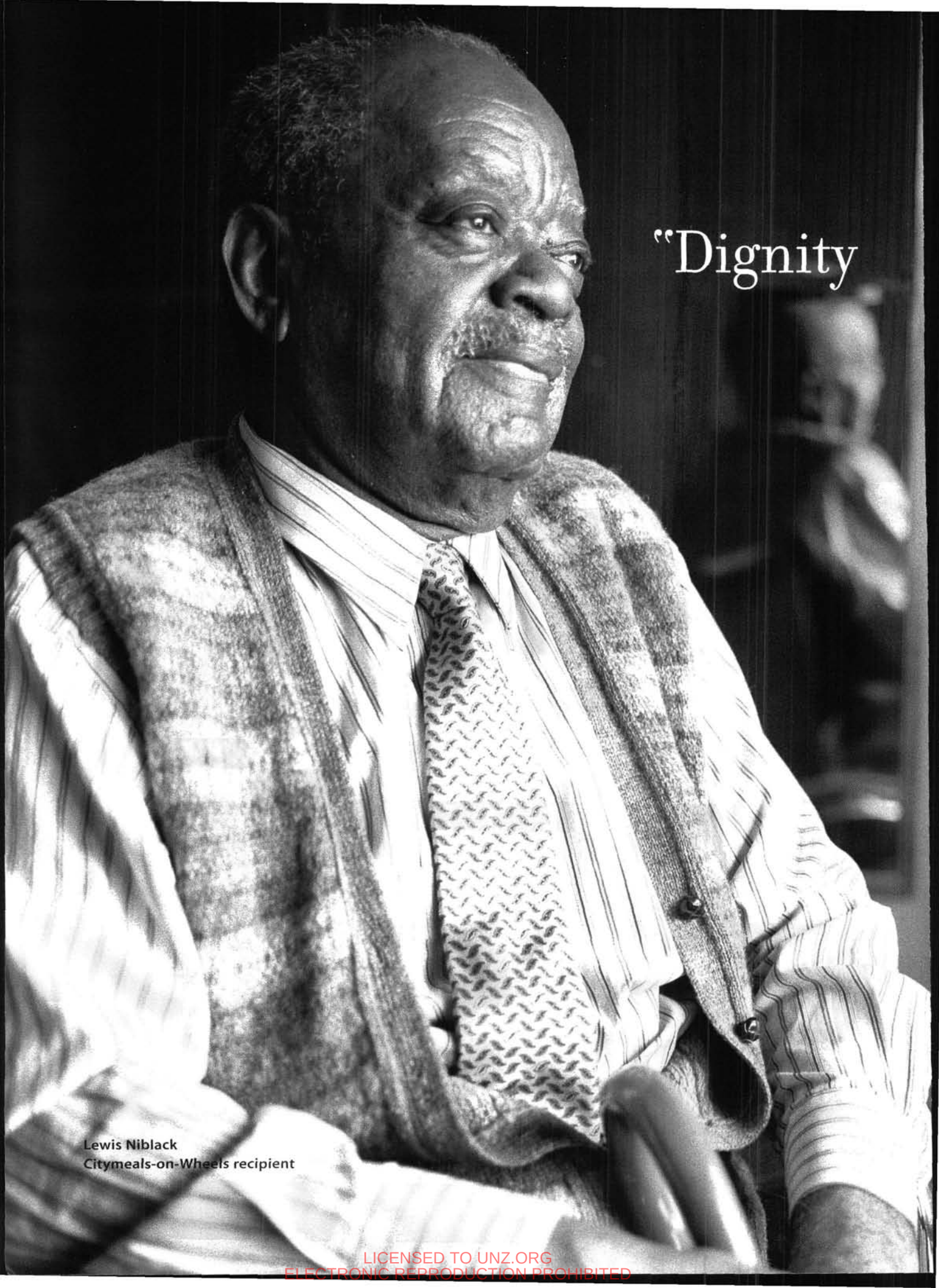

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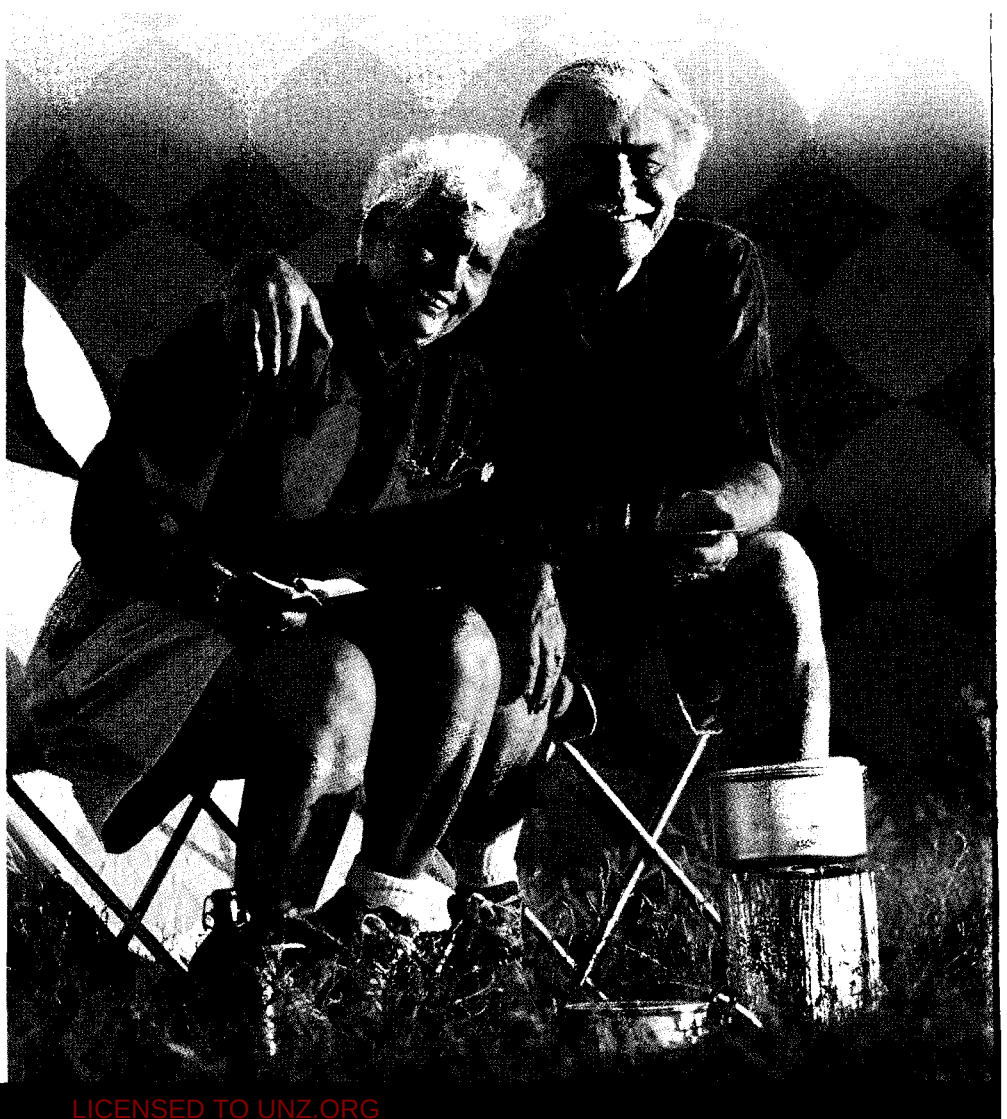

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Smoke and mirrors

TO THE EDITORS:

Charles Duhigg's criticism of Gary Johnson's brave, if not always perfectly stated, opposition to the war on drugs seems to be mostly attitude and very little substance ("Tokin' Reformer," April 3). For example, Duhigg categorizes as "flimsy evidence" Johnson's citing of government statistics showing that, annually, 450,000 Americans die from tobacco use, 150,000 from alcohol, and 100,000 from legal drugs, while there are only about 3,000 deaths from cocaine and heroin and no reported deaths from marijuana. What better evidence that our energy, time, and money are not well-directed?

Johnson has two main faults. First, he uses the widely misunderstood word "legalize" regarding illicit drugs, when he means "control and regulate," as we do with alcohol, tobacco, and prescription drugs. Second, he tries to go too far too fast. The general public is not yet ready for sophisticated discussions concerning how best to deal with cocaine and heroin addicts. Johnson would be better advised to concentrate on decriminalization and regulation of marijuana, fairer sentencing, and harm reduction.

Contrary to what Duhigg would have us believe, Johnson is saying what many politicians and law enforcement officials acknowledge in private. That is hardly a reason to scoff at him.

ROBERT E. FIELD
Co-chair
Common Sense for Drug Policy
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITORS:

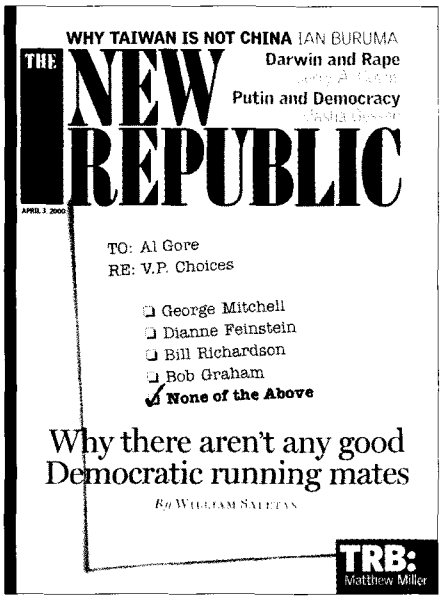
Charles Duhigg has it mostly right about New Mexico's governor, but he doesn't quite get it all. Recent polls show that Gary Johnson's support has plummeted. Duhigg does mention that the Supreme Court had ruled the governor's unilateral Indian gaming compacts illegal, but it gets worse. In at least three instances the state Supreme Court has declared his actions unconstitutional, and in one case (when he continued to implement his welfare-reform plan after the court had deemed it illegal) the court had to declare him in contempt. To a lot of New Mexicans, this guy is just weird.

JOSEPH E. PAULL
Sante Fe, New Mexico

Friendly competition

TO THE EDITORS:

I resent Robert Wright's offhand putdowns ("Same Difference," March 27),



such as his implied invention of the argument that Europe benefited from fragmentation and competition, which he concedes that "many historians (even Landes, oddly) accept but whose full import is rarely drawn out." I don't *accept* it; I *proposed* it (in my book *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*), along with certain consequences, as a major factor in Europe's economic development. I even wrote that, contrary to what I had learned in school, one of the best things to happen to Europe was the fall of Rome.

As for China's stunted growth, I wish I knew the answer. I do cite the efforts of a number of major sinologists to explain the phenomenon, but, when all is said and done, "China remains a mystery." That this stasis was related to cultural attitudes and values, I have no doubt. But it was only half the story. The other half was China's dismissal of what it could have learned of Western technology and science from the sixteenth century on. Its arrogant sense of superiority to a world of barbarians made it a bad learner. Wright misses that: "China," he writes, "lacked such neighborly inspiration." Nonsense. The contacts and inspiration were there. But China found it hard, if not impossible, to profit from them. That, incidentally, remains a problem today for many societies unwilling to admit that they have much to learn.

DAVID LANDES
Cambridge, Massachusetts

ROBERT WRIGHT REPLIES:

I certainly didn't mean to suggest I had invented the theory that Europe's political fragmentation gave it an edge over a politically unified China in the evolution toward industrialization. In my book *Nonzero*, in the course of a chapter-length critique of Eurocentric views of industrialization (including David Landes's), I cite Daniel Chirot, who wrote in 1985: "Had the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties of China failed to unite China, it is quite likely that the first capitalist, industrialist societies would have developed there." As for Landes's suggestion that China had "the contacts and inspiration" to industrialize as fast as Europe, this is what I mean when I say that Landes and some other historians fail to see the full import of Europe's political fragmentation. China lacked what the typical Western European polity had: intense competition from numerous nearby polities at a roughly comparable level of economic and political development—polities that thus provided not only a strong incentive to modernize but ideas (technological, economic, political) about how best to do it.

Other Harrington

TO THE EDITORS:

I opened your April 3 issue with genuine excitement, eager to read Alan Wolfe's review of Maurice Isserman's biography of Michael Harrington ("Sects in the City"). Yet within minutes I was shocked and saddened by Wolfe's review. I am a graduate of Queens College, a former student of Harrington's who later returned, briefly, to Queens as his colleague. I knew Harrington from 1975, when I first arrived at Queens, until his death, and I was a participant in the Monday lunch group to which Wolfe refers (I have also known Wolfe since that time). What Wolfe says about Harrington's generosity of spirit at Queens is correct. But it makes the tone of Wolfe's review all the more perplexing.

Harrington was a great man. His book *The Other America* is a classic, and, as Wolfe acknowledges, it helped to inspire the War on Poverty. Harrington was a public intellectual with genuine public presence: a regular contributor to *Dissent* magazine, a labor activist, a powerful and unrivaled orator, and a participant in an international discourse about democratic socialism that included such important figures as Willy Brandt and Olaf Palme. Harrington had an indefatigable spirit.

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Please address letters to Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (letters may also be sent electronically to tnr@aol.com). All letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be fewer than 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please do not send letters via fax.

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He was in many ways an eternal optimist. To those who knew him—and I did not know him as well as others—I think this was the source of some amusement but also much admiration. And, while many of Harrington's colleagues at Queens chided him for his optimism and regularly articulated powerful critiques of his arguments from the left, virtually all of them genuinely liked him and respected him even when they thought him wrong. And he responded in kind.

Of course Harrington was no saint, and he made mistakes, both personal and political. Wolfe, following Isserman, makes much of Harrington's squabbling with the early SDS over Port Huron. Indeed, he goes so far as to note that Harrington "would apologize for these words for the rest of his life" and that "eventually Harrington fashioned a rapprochement with many New Leftists." But he never draws the obvious conclusion: that Harrington's own conduct over the years was a sign of ethical and political responsibility, the very opposite of the sectarianism that Wolfe wishes to tag him with.

The question that frames Wolfe's review is genuinely important: How could America's foremost democratic socialist have emerged from the sectarian political culture of the Shachtmanite left, and what were the effects of that culture upon Harrington? But Wolfe does little more with this question than insinuate Harrington's supposed "sectarian" guilt by association. Shachtman was a doctrinaire martinet. Tom Kahn was an opportunist. The United Federation of Teachers made serious mistakes in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, with fateful consequences for U.S. race relations. But what does any of this have to do with Harrington? How does it implicate him, his judgments, or his conduct? On this Wolfe says nothing.

Wolfe's assertion that Harrington's activity "left the world no better off and in some ways rendered it worse" is simply mean-spirited. For Wolfe offers not a single example of how the efforts of Harrington rendered the world a worse place. To be sure, Harrington experienced failures, but people who seek to accomplish much often do. The causes for which he fought were generally noble ones, his fight was a noble one, and he stood for decency and truth.

But Wolfe's concluding assertion is worse than mean-spirited—it is absurd: "The fact that we have no more Michael Harringtons also means that we do not have to put up with self-destructive, self-important political messiahs.... Whatever else one can say about the state of the left in American today, there is no Max Shachtman working covertly from within to undermine it. If that is the price we have to pay for the absence of the likes of Michael Harrington, it may be a price worth paying." Note the equivocation—it "may" be a price worth paying. Note the illogic—it may be good that the left is weak, for if it weren't weak it might be weakened by Shachtmanites. And note the reductionism whereby the specific biography of one Michael Harrington is effaced in the name of general statements about presumably generic Harringtons. Wolfe's point: that because Shachtman was a "self-destructive, self-important political messiah," Harrington's life was meaningless or worse, and we would be better off had this life never been lived. Such an insinuation is awful, and, ironically, it recapitulates the worst features of high Stalinist logic. Can this really be what Wolfe meant to say?

JEFFREY C. ISAAC
Indiana University
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FROM WASHINGTON

One of a Kind

SOON BILL GATES may no longer be the world's richest man. The recent plunge in Microsoft stock means Gates could fall behind fellow software tycoon Larry Ellison, cofounder and CEO of Oracle and a truly nasty fellow. I'm thrilled.

Both Ellison and Gates boast net worths of around $50 billion, but Oracle's stock has grown more than fivefold over the past year, while Microsoft's has fallen 14 percent. For the moment, Gates's non-Microsoft holdings still give him a slight edge, but the momentum is clearly on Ellison's side. He could overtake Gates any day now.

If he takes the lead, Ellison, who has long envied Gates, will be ecstatic. But, actually, we all should be. Finally, the *Forbes* 400 would no longer be led by someone with the public image of a geeky Mr. Rogers. It's not that Ellison is a nice guy; in fact, it's the opposite. He's not a nice guy, and he's explicit about it. He has never pretended to be anything but the rapacious capitalist he is. He possesses a blood lust for victory, openly gloats, glories in his obscene wealth, and doesn't try to hide his entrepreneurial brutality behind a nerdy, aw-shucks persona.

In other words, Ellison offers a more honest picture of today's kill-or-be-killed, devour-or-die American capitalism—a spirit brought to its logical extreme in the technology world, where a manifest-destiny sense of acquisitiveness and entitlement is a given among capitalism's *über*-elite. In their everyday language, Silicon Valley's moguls, junior moguls, and wanna-be moguls talk about "owning" markets and "destroying" the competition. "Basically all the big technology companies, all the companies that have won, are run by bloodthirsty killers," says Mitchell Kertzman, a three-time technology CEO currently running an Oracle spin-off called Liberate Technologies, a publicly traded company based in Silicon Valley. "You have to be a total shark to succeed at that level." His prime examples: Ellison and Gates.

A quick review of Gates's career shows just how ruthless he is: from the moment he laid eyes on a computer, he saw its money-making potential. He had started three businesses by the time he graduated from high school, he dreamed he'd be worth at least $1 million by age 25, and he famously dropped out of Harvard University because he spied a prime money-making opportunity. Contrary to his carefully cultivated reputation, Gates's true prowess is not as a technologist but as a businessman; he hasn't written code for Microsoft since the early '80s. In the early '90s, a former Gates lieutenant told *Business Week* that at Microsoft he always felt he was playing "Machiavellian poker games.... You hid things even if it would blindside people you were working with." Microsoft routinely partners with a company only to compete against it a year later, selling a remarkably similar product. Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson recently cited Microsoft for squashing innovations "for the sole reason that they do not coincide with Microsoft's self-interest." So much for Gates's reputation as someone more in love with progress than with money.

Yet, despite the overwhelming evidence, Microsoft has successfully crafted an image of Gates as a mop-headed computer geek, an accidental billionaire who loves nothing more than tinkering with high-tech toys. Indeed, when journalists ask Americans to list the people they most admire, Gates consistently makes the top ten.

It's a safe bet that Ellison never will. Unlike Gates, he's never bothered to pretend he's a regular Joe who just happens to have a net worth the size of Nigeria's. When he appeared on "Oprah," he invited the show's crew to tape him driving his $350,000 Bentley convertible and sitting in the cockpit of one of the jets in his fleet. According to the book *The Difference Between God and Larry Ellison (God Doesn't Think He's Larry Ellison)*, by Mike Wilson, Ellison hit his third wife-to-be with a prenuptial agreement a few hours before their wedding (sign or the wedding is off) and left her a few months after the birth of their second child. When sued for wrongful termination by a female Oracle employee (he settled out of court by giving her $100,000 but later countersued and got the money back), it came out that he was dating no fewer than three Oracle employees simultaneously. When the woman claimed Ellison had promised to buy her a $50,000 Acura NSX, he was forced to confess that he had bought no fewer than four of the cars that year.

Like Gates, Ellison played rough on his way to the top of his part of the tech industry: the database world. "At Oracle we didn't just want to beat a competitor, we wanted to destroy them," says Jerry Held, a former Oracle executive. "Even when the competitor was on the ground, you kept on stomping. And then, if they were still able to wiggle a finger, you stomped on their hand."

In the early days of Oracle, which was founded in 1977, Ellison would end company meetings with the chant "Kill, kill, kill." And, indeed, the company's sales force suffered a reputation for doing anything to close a deal. One well-regarded consulting outfit concluded that Oracle's customers tended to regard the company as a bunch of "thieves, crooks, and bandits." Ellison's "welcome to the company" speech for new Oracle employees typically included the reminder "We're carnivores here." A former director in Oracle's marketing department, Nancy Stinnette, would receive her orders and flinch. "Larry wants us to shove this up their ass," she would be told. "Larry wants us to really kick them in the balls."

Like Microsoft, Oracle has had its share of legal troubles, including a Security and Exchange Commission complaint from the early '90s that reads, in part, "Oracle double-billed customers for products, double-billed customers for technical support services, invoiced customers for work that was never performed, failed to credit customers for product returns, booked revenues that were contingent...." Oracle eventually settled the case out of court, paying a $100,000 fine without admitting liability.

It's not that Gates and Ellison are the same. Geoffrey Moore, a Silicon Valley pundit and author who has studied Oracle's business practices with a mixture of awe and revulsion, calls Ellison a "samurai" who is "more outwardly brutal than Gates. Both have consistently pursued strategies of mass destruction, but where Gates is chillingly efficient, with Larry it's like he's trying to meet some kind of need." In other words, they're both totally ruthless, but Gates is less extroverted about it.

Today, Larry Ellison isn't a household name. But, if he becomes the world's richest man, that will change. He'll cut a high media profile—and more people will see in his arrogance and excess the true nature of the new economy. It won't look pretty, but that's because it isn't.

GARY RIVLIN

GARY RIVLIN is a feature writer for *The Industry Standard* and the author of *The Plot to Get Bill Gates*, due out in paperback this July.

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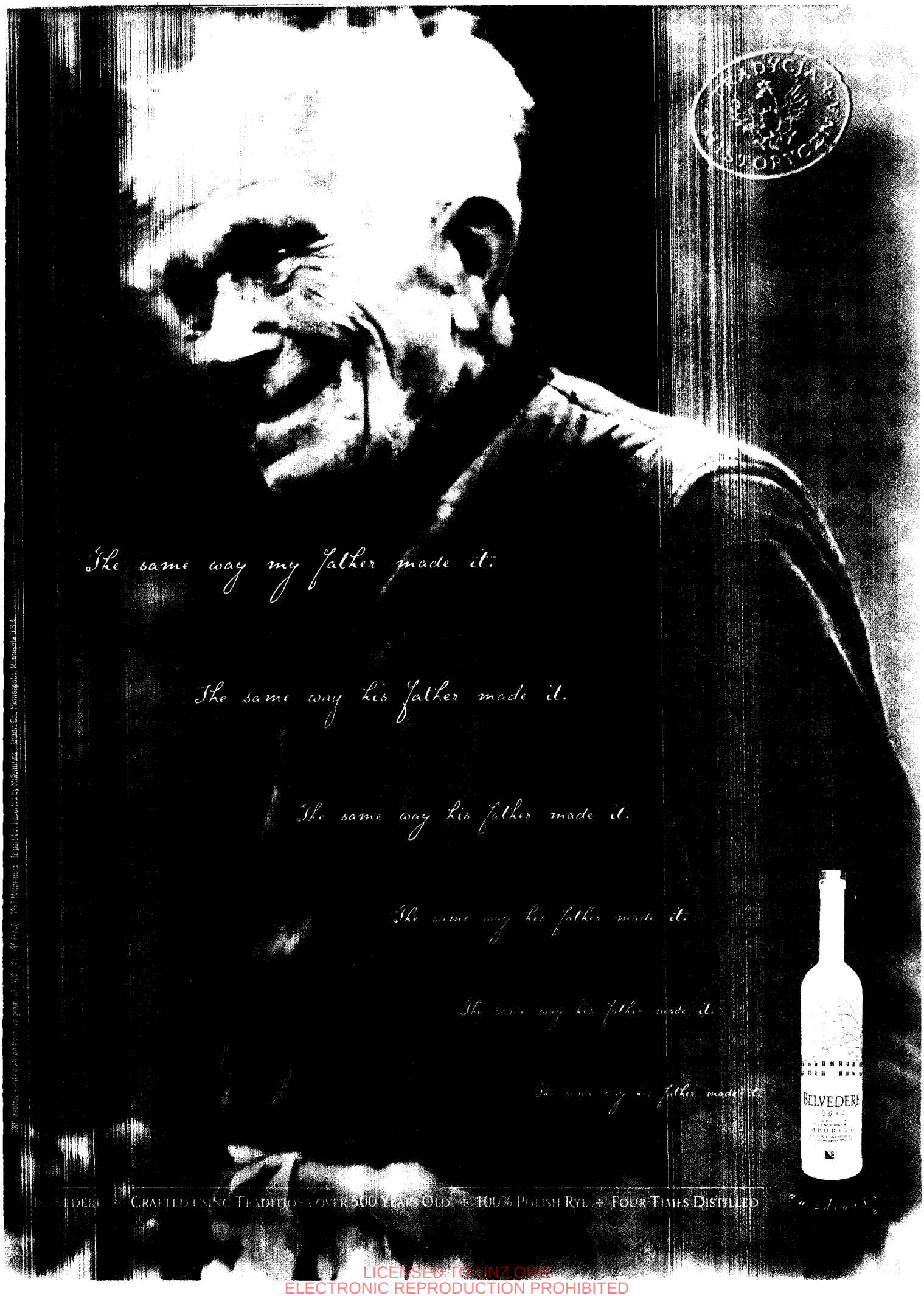
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Trial and Error

IT TOOK THREE years of painstaking investigation to determine that the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, was the work of two Libyan intelligence agents almost certainly acting on orders from Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. It took eight more years of even more painstaking negotiations, backed by tough international sanctions, to persuade Qaddafi to give up the two Libyans for prosecution. But last Wednesday, in Camp Zeist in the Netherlands, the trial of the men accused of murdering 270 people—189 of them American—was at long last called to order. And perhaps no one is more pleased than ... Muammar Qaddafi.

For starters, it's likely the defendants will be acquitted. And not because they're innocent. Fragments of the Lockerbie bomb were found embedded in a suitcase that airline records show had been routed to the plane at Malta's airport, where the two suspects worked for Libyan Air. A notebook belonging to one of them contained remarks on how to steal luggage routing tags from Malta Air. A T-shirt apparently wrapped around the bomb was traced to a shop in Malta 300 yards away from where one of the suspects was staying. Shards of a timing device found in the T-shirt were traced to a Swiss manufacturer who claimed the Libyan government as a customer. Finally, a knowledgeable Libyan defector has fingered the two men.

Still, this evidence may not be enough. The Swiss manufacturer now appears to be recanting his claim to have produced the timing device. The defense will likely point to plausible alternative culprits backed by Syria or Iran. And, most importantly, the suspects will benefit from the peculiarities of the judicial system under which—as part of the deal worked out with Qaddafi—they are being tried. Their case will be heard not by a jury but by a panel of three Scottish judges who, even if they believe the suspects are guilty, can return a verdict of "not proven" if they feel there's insufficient evidence to convict.

In short, the United States may be about to hand Qaddafi a huge public-relations victory, one that may even help bolster his hideous regime. Qaddafi is already preparing, threatening to follow up the trial by suing the United States for the damages Libya has suffered as a result of international sanctions imposed after the bombing.

It gets worse. Even if the Libyan agents are convicted, Qaddafi still wins. That's because the Libyan leader, as part of the agreement to turn the suspects over, has been virtually guaranteed that the hand of justice won't come anywhere near him. Specifically, in the letter from U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan that cinched the deal, Annan reportedly promised Qaddafi that the trial would not "undermine" his government. U.S. State Department officials, who approved the letter, deny that it was intended to limit the trial's scope. But their credibility isn't helped by the fact that they've refused to make the letter public—agreeing only to read portions of it to the families of the Lockerbie bombing victims.

So the United States has negotiated a trial that probably won't convict anyone and almost certainly won't touch the one man most responsible. And, in return, it has agreed to suspend U.N. sanctions against Tripoli. U.S. officials insist the suspension is temporary, but Russia, China, and France—three countries with economic interests in Libya—will almost certainly veto any attempt to reimpose sanctions. In effect, Qaddafi's regime—despite its campaign of terror against the West and against its own people—is back in the community of nations.

True, the United States still maintains its own sanctions—including a trade embargo—against Tripoli; and the administration vows to keep them in place until Qaddafi admits responsibility for Lockerbie and offers the victims' families restitution. But even on this the administration appears to be softening, recently allowing reps from four U.S. oil companies that once operated in Libya to return to survey their old oil fields and suggesting that it might lift its travel ban altogether.

It would be hard to justify such overtures even if Libya were an economic powerhouse whose markets the United States could not ignore or a military behemoth we'd be ill-advised to isolate. But Libya is neither. It's an economically insignificant, ideologically ludicrous backwater ruled by a delusional maniac whose regime we should do everything in our power to subvert. There is no reason to cut the deal the United States has cut—except for the hope that the trial about to commence at an old U.S. air base near Amsterdam will finally bring true justice for the long-suffering families whose loved ones Qaddafi murdered in cold blood. And that, tragically, is almost no hope at all. ■

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NOTEBOOK

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: In contrast to Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who usually seems to pander only to the New York police, Hillary Clinton has shamelessly courted almost every constituency in her Senate run. She leaked that she had Jewish relatives, and she made a pilgrimage to the offices of the Reverend Al Sharpton. She traded in her Chicago Cubs cap for a Yankees one, though she made it clear she liked the Mets (in Queens) as much as the Bronx Bombers. But last Saturday it was Clinton, in one of her first real tests, who risked offending a crucial voting bloc on behalf of principle. At a forum for the loopy Independence Party, which is the state affiliate of the Reform Party and is partly controlled by Lenora Fulani and Pat Buchanan, Clinton attacked the "anti-Semitism, extremism, prejudice, and intolerance" of some of its members. Though she said she'd accept the endorsement of the party, which, with more than 170,000 members, can be decisive in close races, she pointedly proclaimed: "I cannot and will not, as the price for any endorsement, embrace or excuse those who use hateful rhetoric that separates and divides. So let me just be very clear: I will not run on a line with Pat Buchanan on the top of the ticket." Nor did Clinton stop there. At a press conference following the forum, the first lady singled out Fulani for opprobrium. In contrast, the once seemingly courageous mayor went out of his way to kowtow to Fulani and her forces, saying they could help him reach out to black voters. Never mind that Fulani once marched with Muammar Qaddafi in Libya and finds nothing wrong with calling Jews the "storm troopers for industrial capitalism." Nor did Giuliani stop there. The man who once rightly called Buchanan anti-Semitic now championed his right to be on the Independence ballot. "If you're looking for a candidate that can be honestly described as an independent," Giuliani said of himself and his new friends, "I think we're a natural fit." So, alas, it seems.

IT DEPENDS ON WHAT THE DEFINITION OF TEN IS: The debate over George W. Bush's proposed tax cut has hinged on the technical question of how much it would cost the government in forgone revenues. Bush staffers have been claiming it would cost just $1.3 trillion over ten years—which, combined with some optimistic assumptions about spending, would keep Bush's budgets from dipping into the red. The problem is that independent analyses show that Bush's tax cut would cost far more than $1.3 trillion, and the Bush campaign has refused to reveal how it came up with the number. This week, though, the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation released an analysis of Bush's plan that showed it would indeed cost only $1.3 trillion. The Bushies immediately announced their vindication. Larry Lindsey, Bush's chief economic adviser, proclaimed, "The Joint Committee on Taxation proves that Vice President Gore was badly mistaken, inaccurately portraying Governor Bush's plan as costing sixty percent more than it actually does." Press accounts dutifully reported the counterclaims in the scrupulously evenhanded style of daily journalism. But what the Bush staff did not mention—and none of the reporters realized—is that the JCT data that the Texas governor is touting do not cover the ten-year cost of Bush's tax cut—it covers only the first *nine* years. The Bush campaign has been shockingly dishonest about this. Its press release touts the figure as accounting for the "Current 'Ten Year' Budget Period"; the quotes around the phrase "Ten Year" apparently signify that the budget period in question is actually nine years. "Ten Year" is perhaps meant as some sort of figure of speech. Perhaps Bush should rethink his plans to make honesty the central issue of the campaign.

IT'S EITHER THIS OR RENAME LAKE PLACID: April was a bad month for the "get back to nature via horsepower" crowd. First, the National Park Service banned snowmobiles in most federal parks and recreation areas. Then jet skis were banned in 358 of the 379 national parks. Why have these vehicles been restricted? Two simple reasons: noise and smog. Jet skis and snowmobiles produce earsplitting roars that shatter the parks' serenity. And it's not just the tree-huggers who hate this—some state and county parks, not to mention some private resorts, are also banning these machines owing to their unbearable noise. Jet skis and snowmobiles are also smog fonts, emitting 100 to 1,000 times as much pollution per mile traveled as a new car. The obnoxious noise and belching fumes leave wilderness and resort managers little choice but to impose bans. And why are snowmobiles and jet skis so dirty and loud? Because they don't have the mufflers and tailpipe controls that make cars, which are much larger and more powerful, run cleanly and quietly. For years, jet ski and snowmobile manufacturers have resisted all attempts to impose noise and emissions regulations on their products. Conservatives in Congress have fought environmental regulation for jet skis and snowmobiles, too, usually with blather about how these machines represent "individualism." Now the bill for all this obfuscation has come due, and the products have been banned from their primary intended use. That's right—jet ski and snowmobile manufacturers will lose business because they *weren't* regulated. If they'd been regulated, everything would be fine. Something for the Tom DeLay set to chew on.

DON'T FORGET RACISM AGAINST THE TAIWANESE: One of the left's most noxious debating tactics is to equate a political position with an ethnic minority, thereby insulating it from criticism; for instance, because blacks support affirmative action, opposition to affirmative action is racist. Now the Elián González incident has provided conservatives with the chance to engage in some victimology of their own. An April *Wall Street Journal* op-ed tabbed Cuban-Americans "The Ethnic Group Liberals Love to Hate." A recent article in *The Weekly Standard* charged "members of the press" with "special contempt for Cuban-Americans." The evidence? A *New York Times* reporter calling the Elián story "the dumbest thing I've ever covered," Dan Rather saying "It's hard to see how [Reno] could get criticized for the way the operation was carried out," and other statements that deviated from the conservative line but had no apparent ethnic

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content. When liberals engage in this kind of special pleading, conservatives rightly deride it as political correctness. But then maybe they just never had the chance to shield themselves behind a minority group before.

ASSAULT WITH A RUDIMENTARY WEAPON: Maybe nine-year-old Michael Hagood was guilty of bad timing. On April 12, almost a year to the day after the Columbine massacre, Hagood told one of his fourth-grade classmates at Upper Elementary School in Plainsboro, New Jersey, that he was going to "shoot" another student—with a "paper wasp." In other words, Hagood planned to launch a piece of paper with a rubber band at one of his classmates. The parents of another student apparently heard about Hagood's plan and promptly notified the Middlesex County school district, which promptly notified the police, who showed up at Hagood's house at 12:30 a.m. on April 13 to interview him. Hagood was subsequently suspended from school so that he could be questioned by school officials and undergo a psychological evaluation. "We just wanted to make sure that students were safe," explained district spokesperson Geraldine Hutner. But what if Hagood comes back to class with a straw and some spitballs?

OVERKILL: A sampling of news coverage of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of Saigon and the—supposed—end of the Vietnam War:

—VIETNAM—NOT OVER YET (AP Worldstream, April 30)
—"Bay Lop's family skipped the dancing pink dragon and all the hoopla Sunday celebrating the 25th anniversary of victory in Vietnam. As with so many others, their war is not over." (AP state and local wire, May 1)
—"The war is over—25 years, according to the calendar—yet the war never ends." (*Houston Chronicle*, April 30)
—"The war ended in 1975, but for Vietnamese civilians it goes on and on." (*Time*, April 17)
—"For those Canadians who fought in the Vietnam War, the fight for recognition and respect goes on." (CTV News, April 29) ■

VINT'S WEEK

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Political power versus buying power.

A Day at the National Mall

By SARAH WILDMAN

IT WAS HOT and sunny, the first real day of spring. And people turned out in droves—wallets stuffed with bills, T-shirts tied around taut waists—to a street festival on Pennsylvania Avenue. Toddlers screamed; moms and dads posed for pictures. The smell of food frying filled the air, and pricey bottles of water overflowed trash cans. Dot-coms passed out freebies—bright yellow bags emblazoned with the logo GAY.COM and stickers reading PLANETOUT.COM. Banners advertising the event's corporate sponsors—United Airlines, America Online, Miller Brewing Company, and others—were visible at every turn.

Welcome to the gay rights movement 2000. The ostensible message of last week's Millennium March on Washington was "Organize." Sponsored most prominently by the nation's largest gay rights group, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the march was billed as a political gathering to galvanize the gay vote for November. But the real message may have been "Consume." The march showed how deeply enmeshed gay culture and corporate culture have become. And it illustrated the strange dilemma that this fusion presents. It's all well and good to join the commercial mainstream—in fact, it's a sign of equality. But for a still-oppressed minority, it's equality of a precarious sort, because the commercial mainstream in twenty-first-century America is a pretty apolitical place. In fact, it tends to turn activism into kitsch.

The street fair accompanying the march sprawled through six caged-in blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue. For $5 a head (a suggested "donation" that, if not paid, apparently kept you outside the gates), festival-goers gained entrance to a bustle of commercial activity. Vendors hawked gay-friendly CDs, rainbow jewelry, and clothes. Square dancing was an option. The Showtime cable network set up a stage from which it promoted its "powerful programming that smashes stereotypes and breaks down barriers" and passed out fans embossed with words like "disco whore" to the sweaty crowd. "I think it's wonderful," said a woman from Florida. "People with money are the ones who will make equality happen. If we support them, they'll support us." The scene served as graphic testament to the vision of HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch, who famously told *The Washington Post* in 1996, "I have an activist heart, but I am a capitalist tool."

A few blocks away, on the Mall, where speakers addressed a crowd of hundreds of thousands, people were selling things too. The dais was heavy on celebrities like Anne Heche and Melissa Etheridge. Ellen DeGeneres appeared onstage in a Mickey Mouse T-shirt and—in a show of gratitude to the owners of ABC, the home of her (now canceled) eponymous sitcom—thanked Disney. Even when speakers did focus on issues, the crowd seemed strangely uninformed. "That representative was fucking awesome!" said a 20-year-old from Richmond, Virginia, with multiple piercings after Wisconsin Representative Tammy Baldwin spoke. "I don't know her name, though. I'm not really into politics."

Martina Navratilova, the retired tennis star, made perhaps the most gratuitous plug of the day. Although Navratilova, because of her sexual orientation, lost out on many endorsements during her tennis career, her retirement coincided with the explosion of the gay market. Hoping to tap into it, since leaving the sport she's shilled for several companies, including Subaru—rapidly becoming lesbians' unofficial car of choice, with ad slogans like "It's not a choice. It's the way we're built"—and Visa, with its "Rainbow Card." After a brief motivational speech, Navratilova proudly proclaimed that the Rainbow Card has raised more than $1 million for lesbian and gay causes since it was introduced in 1995. While she spoke, people in the crowd distributed Rainbow Card stickers bearing the slogan PEEL AND WEAR WITH PRIDE! and advertising the card's toll-free number.

WITH ALL THIS shilling, there wasn't much time left for substance. No one felt the pinch more than the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), an organization that fights harassment of gays and lesbians in the Armed Forces. Representatives from SLDN had been slotted for the final few minutes of the six-hour speaking program, but when the celebrity-packed afternoon ran late, concerned SLDN reps were told they would be cut from the schedule. Only after much protest was SLDN given a few minutes of stage time—right before the dais was dismantled. So when Patricia Kutteles—whose son Private Barry Winchell was murdered last summer by a fellow soldier at Fort Campbell because he was gay—made her first-ever public call to end the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, only a few hundred stragglers were there to hear it. Retired Major General Vance Coleman, a straight African American officer and the highest-ranking member of the military ever to address a gay crowd, spoke for less than a minute. "To the extent that the purpose of a march like this is to galvanize people," lamented Michelle Benecke of SLDN, "[marchers] didn't get an update on this issue [and] didn't receive any details about what they could do once they get back home to make a difference."

But Benecke's earnest fretting felt out of place. Toward the end of the day, as the parade of celebrity speakers was beginning to wind down, a white, middle-aged lesbian took a break on the steps of the nearby National Gallery of Art. "Oh God," she moaned to one of her friends, "this event has so many speakers. We're gay! Can't that also mean gay like fun?" For better and for worse, it can. ■

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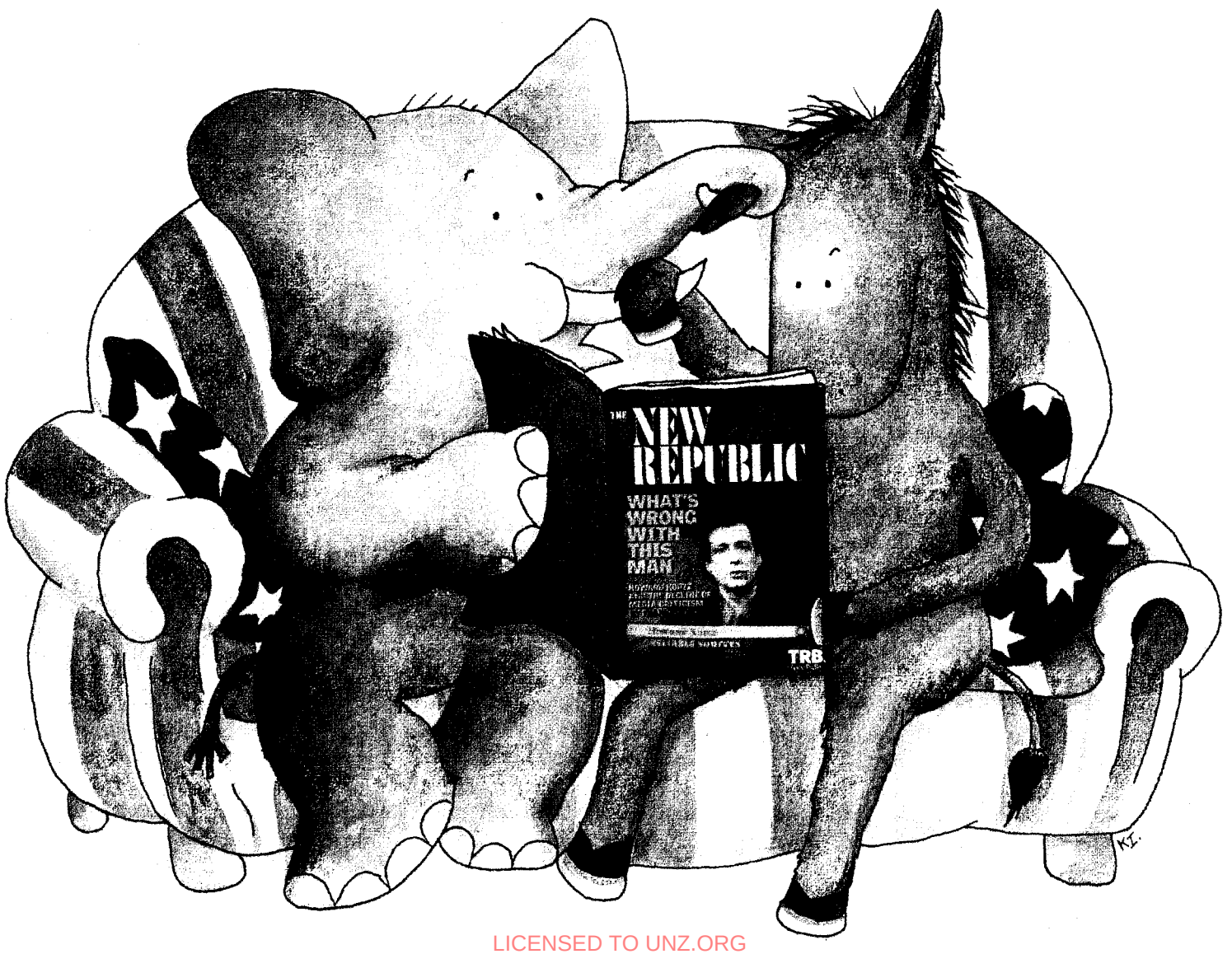

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Kerrey's last stand.

Retirement Plan

By MATTHEW MILLER

ONE SUNDAY MORNING very soon, after George W. Bush outlines his plan to partially privatize Social Security and Vice President Al Gore blasts it as another of the Texas governor's "risky schemes" (see taxes, foreign policy), retiring Democratic Senator Bob Kerrey will pop up on the chat shows to hail Bush's leadership and assail Gore's irresponsibility. With this valedictory lap, Kerrey, a longtime leader on entitlement reform, will end the Clinton era much as he began it: poking the administration in the eye to make the world safe for long-term Social Security and Medicare fixes.

It will culminate a long and unpleasant encounter. Clinton made short work of Kerrey during the Nebraskan's ill-considered 1992 presidential run; indeed, the only memorable thing about Kerrey's campaign was his prophetic assessment of Clinton as "an unusually good liar." The next year, the new president had to beg Kerrey for his decisive vote on the budget, after which Kerrey publicly lectured the already humiliated Clinton for sidestepping tough choices. Clinton and Gore ignored Kerrey's entitlement-reform panel in 1994 and deep-sixed last year's bipartisan Medicare-reform commission (on which Kerrey served) after telling centrist Democrats they wanted a deal. This winter, Kerrey crisscrossed New Hampshire for Bill Bradley, cataloging the veep's deceptions and fund-raising woes and even vowing at one point to "kick Gore's ass." A young Gore supporter in the Granite State literally threw mud on Kerrey and called the Vietnam-injured vet a "cripple," an episode Gore's press secretary refused to condemn.

The groundwork for Kerrey's latest offensive began months ago, when Republican Senator Judd Gregg of New Hampshire urged Bush to reach out to the Nebraskan before touching the presidential campaign's proverbial "third rail." A few weeks ago, Bush aides asked Gregg to set something up. On April 26, the Texas governor came to Washington to see Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov. And Bush, joined by economic adviser Larry Lindsey, met with Kerrey and Gregg for nearly an hour in his room at the JW Marriott hotel, just a couple of blocks from the White House. Near the running machine placed in the fitness-obsessed Texas governor's room, the men discussed legislation introduced by Kerrey and Gregg to let younger workers put two percent of today's twelve percent Social Security payroll tax into private accounts they would control. "He's not an empty suit," Kerrey told me after the meeting. "He struck me as reasonably intelligent and definitely passionate and interested in this issue."

At the meeting, Bush said he expected the House and Senate to be closely divided between the parties after the election, making bipartisan cooperation essential. "Do you think something like this could be acceptable?" Kerrey recalls Bush asking. "Could Democrats work with me on something like this?" Yes, Kerrey told him, if he framed the issue properly.

IN DEMOCRATIC CIRCLES, Kerrey is a Social Security heretic. He sees small private accounts as "a means to an end," a way to help the elderly build wealth rather than simply maintaining their income. With payroll taxes already high and the ratio of workers to seniors shrinking fast, he argues, Social Security in its current form looks to younger Americans like a raw deal. "If John Sweeney were negotiating on behalf of the AFL-CIO today and we didn't have the current system, he wouldn't take it," Kerrey quips.

Kerrey wants to help poorer workers use the magic of compound interest to build nest eggs that meet their families' needs, thereby lessening the government's already spiraling obligations. Slowing the growth of Social Security and Medicare, he insists, is the only way to make room in the budget for other causes down the road—like universal health care, urban schools, and student loans—that liberals claim to cherish. "Democrats should take the lead on this debate," Kerrey says. But if Bush does instead, Kerrey seems poised to follow.

For his part, Gore is preparing to pounce. As word of Bush's intentions leaked last week, the veep pre-attacked the plan as "an ideologically driven scheme that is bad for families and bad for the economy." "He's not going to need cover," Gore flack Chris Lehane told me when I asked him about Kerrey's likely support for the Bush plan, "he's going to need smoke and mirrors." In a conference call with reporters last Tuesday, Bush adviser Lindsey countered that Gore has his head in the sand on a major national challenge. "I don't know what planet he's on," Lindsey fumed.

All of which suggests that Social Security could be the hottest issue of the campaign, leaving Kerrey where he wants to be: in the thick of things, puncturing Democratic shibboleths and Clintonites alike. Headed for the presidency of the New School (and more time with his longtime New York girlfriend) next winter, Kerrey vows vaguely that he'll be back in the arena someday, somehow.

In the meantime, the impishness that's made Kerrey popular with journalists (and the model for the sympathetic hero in Joe Klein's new novel, *The Running Mate*) still charms. I asked Kerrey why he couldn't just shut up. After all, it may be rational and defensible for Democrats to use Social Security to nail Bush, win back the House of Representatives, and pave the way for Social Security reform on more progressive terms. Kerrey replied that he'd look "*very* hypocritical and dishonest" if he held his tongue after years of speaking out on the issue. Then he paused. "I can take looking a *little* hypocritical and dishonest," Kerrey added, the wink audible over the phone line. "But this would be too much." ■

MATTHEW MILLER, a syndicated columnist, is an L.A.-based senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center.

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Putumayo Dispatch

Aid and Discomfort

By KIRK SEMPLE

ASK 44-YEAR-OLD farmer José Aldemar Pedreros about the future here in southern Colombia's cocaine country, and he motions toward the sky. He's not asking for divine intervention. Rather, Pedreros is referring to a more concrete power from on high: the aerial-eradication planes that he fears are coming to spray herbicide on all the coca crops.

Pedreros lives with his family in the state of Putumayo, a Vermont-sized slice of jungle and river that borders Ecuador and Peru, produces about 50 percent of Colombia's coca leaves, and harbors many left-wing guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, and narcotraffickers. As such, Putumayo is where much of the Clinton administration's proposed $1.3 billion in "emergency aid" for Colombia will be spent (if it ever gets through the Senate). Some of the money will pay for things like crop substitution and transportation infrastructure. But the bulk of it, about 80 percent, will go to Colombia's military and police—to be spent on the aerial-eradication planes, Black Hawk helicopters, and U.S.-trained infantry meant to rescue Putumayo.

But there's a problem. Pedreros doesn't want to be rescued—at least not in the way officials in Bogotá and Washington plan to do it. Pedreros destroyed most of his small coca crop a few years ago as part of a government-sponsored crop-substitution program to produce and market hearts of palm, but now he fears that the aerial-eradication planes sent to spray the region's coca harvest will destroy his subsistence crops as well. What's more, Pedreros doesn't think beefing up Colombia's military and police will cow the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (the group is known by its Spanish acronym, FARC), which derives huge profits from taxing the drug trade. Instead, he predicts, the offensive will only provoke the insurgents—further inflaming Colombia's 36-year civil war and scattering residents, many of whom originally came to Putumayo to escape fighting elsewhere. "The politicians say they're getting money [from the United States and Europe] to do away with drugs," says Pedreros. "They're saying it's to help the farmer. Lies! They're sending the money to kill."

Pedreros is not alone. In fact, Putumayo's 330,000 residents, many of them small farmers and indigenous Indians, seem to have formed a consensus: that the U.S. aid meant to support President Andres Pastrana's much-hyped Plan Colombia—or, as it's sarcastically referred to here, "the famous Plan Colombia"—may do more harm than good. "With the problem of fumigation, everybody is saying, 'Will it happen? Will it not happen? What's going to happen to us?'" says Manuel Antonio Alzate, mayor of Puerto Asis, a key population center located on the muddy Putumayo River—a major drug-trafficking corridor.

Alzate's questions are not just rhetorical. He and the region's other leaders will be crucial to implementing much of the social-rescue plan for Putumayo: they're the ones who'll have to convince peasants to participate in the central government's crop-substitution programs and other social initiatives. And they're the ones who'll have to convince villagers to deny the FARC the popular support it needs to survive. But these leaders say they've been almost entirely left out of the discussions surrounding Plan Colombia. And, from the little they do know about it, they're not enthusiastic.

For one thing, many Putumayons don't think a military campaign against narcotraffickers, particularly those in the FARC, will work. As long as there's a demand for drugs, they reason, narcotics trafficking will remain lucrative, and traffickers will find a way to produce their goods. If producers are squeezed out of Putumayo, they'll just move deeper into the Colombian Amazon or across the borders into Ecuador and Brazil. The coca-growing industry will fracture, shift, and recompose like a blob of mercury.

What's more, some Putumayons contend, the two halves of the American-backed program—increased attacks on traffickers and increased aid for farmers—can't coexist. Increased fighting might even send the region's nongovernmental organizations packing, making serious economic development impossible. "If something happens to us, we're going to get out of here," says Eder Sánchez, a prominent social-development leader in Puerto Asis and the president of the Putumayo farmers' union.

A better strategy, argue Alzate and other civic leaders, would be more economic assistance and less of the military campaign that undermines it. They'd like money to build transportation and market infrastructure, establish credit for loans, and improve education—alternative development initiatives to provide non-coca-related jobs for residents. They want spraying programs delayed until crop-substitution initiatives are put in place and given time to work. "Let's make social investment first," implores Alzate. "If after a period the coca isn't destroyed, spray. It seems much more just."

But community leaders doubt their ideas will be seriously considered. "They'll bring it when it's ready and put it in place," says Dagoberto Martínez, a rural development organizer, of Plan Colombia. This feeling of disenfranchisement isn't new. The national government left Putumayo to its own devices long ago, like the worst sort of slumlord. Puerto Asis's downtown only got a communal electrical grid at the end of 1998; until then, residents depended on privately owned generators for power. Most of the roads in town remain unpaved; most of the state is without roads of any kind.

To many in Putumayo, though, this neglect is starting to look pretty benign compared with the government's newfound attentiveness. The region is already bracing for war. In the countryside, which is controlled by the FARC, the guerrillas have begun an aggressive campaign to recruit minors and

KIRK SEMPLE is a journalist based in Bogotá.

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arm farming families in anticipation of the aerial-eradication program and military onslaught. And in Puerto Asis, where paramilitaries have the final word, the last priest at the town's principal Catholic church had to resign his post because he developed an ulcer from the pressure, says his successor, Father Luis Alfonso Gómez. According to Gómez, two other priests who spoke out about human rights abuses were forced to leave town after uncovering paramilitary murder plots against them.

"The critical reality here," confides Sister Angela María Granada of the local mission of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, "is that everybody is scared to death." And knowing that the Clinton administration may be sending them $1.3 billion only makes them feel worse. ■

The Miami Herald's Cuban problem.

Between the Lines

By Ryan Lizza

There is no bigger challenge for a local newspaper than a big story in its backyard. And, when the paper rises to the occasion, the rewards are immense. *The Boston Globe* won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the city's busing crisis in 1975. The *Los Angeles Times* won one in 1993 for its reporting on the Rodney King riots. And, last month, both of Denver's major papers won Pulitzers for their coverage of Columbine.

Few papers needed such an opportunity more than *The Miami Herald*, a once prestigious daily that during the 1990s saw its profits drop, its circulation decline, and its share of Pulitzers dry up. And, when Elián González was picked up off the Florida shore, the paper got its chance. But it's blown it. The *Herald*'s editorial page has been spineless and ineffectual. The paper's news section, despite assigning usually six and sometimes as many as 18 reporters to the Elián beat, has been repeatedly scooped by in-town and out-of-town competitors. The reason the paper couldn't capitalize? The same reason it declined in the first place: its dysfunctional relationship with the Cuban-American community, a relationship that has led it to try to embody Miami rather than provide the city with honest, fearless coverage of the news.

The *Herald*'s rocky relationship with Miami's Cuban-Americans began during the 1980 Mariel boatlift, which brought 125,000 Cubans to America. The *Herald* stridently editorialized against the flood of refugees—chastising President Carter for being "afraid to anger Cuban-American voters by demanding an end to the influx"—and then filled its pages with consistently negative coverage of the new arrivals. As Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick write in their book about Miami, *City on the Edge*, the *Herald* "shrilly echoed Castro's characterization of the new refugees" as criminals and mental patients (even though only about ten percent of the new refugees fell into those categories).

The *Herald*'s treatment of Miami's Cuban-Americans was grossly insensitive, bordering on xenophobic. So when the Cuban-Americans, in part motivated by that coverage, began to organize into a political force in the mid-'80s, it was hardly a surprise that they flexed some of their muscle in the *Herald*'s direction. In 1987, the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF), headed by Jorge Mas Canosa, ran a full-page ad in the paper, declaring: "All our achievements have been accomplished with a national press coverage that has often portrayed us as extremists.... *The Miami Herald* bears tremendous responsibility for this injustice.... *The Miami Herald* is aggressive in its ignorance of our people."

The *Herald* got the message. By the end of the '80s, the newspaper was editorializing in favor of admitting Latin American immigrants into the country; it spiffed up and relaunched its long-suffering Spanish-language supplement; and it gave a job on its editorial page to a man who had once chained himself to the *Herald*'s building to protest the paper's Cuba coverage. Even the paper's ill-fated 1989 decision to hire David Lawrence as publisher, a staunch devotee of "civic journalism"—a softer, less controversial approach to news that proved to be the downfall of many papers across the country—was, in part, motivated by its desire to placate the Cuban-American community.

But in 1992, after the *Herald* editorialized against then-Representative Robert Torricelli's legislation to strengthen the embargo against Cuba, the comity ended. CANF, which had lobbied for the bill, launched a campaign to discredit the *Herald*. Mas Canosa blasted the paper as a tool of Castro's regime. *Herald* vending machines were smeared with feces. Staffers received death threats. Lawrence began starting his car in the morning with a remote-control device. Advertisers were targeted with letter-writing campaigns, and city buses carried huge ads reading *YO NO CREO EN EL HERALD*—"I don't believe in the *Herald*."

Deeming its earlier pacification strategy insufficient, the *Herald* redoubled its appeasement efforts. It shied away from critical coverage of Miami's Cuban-American community. It spun off its Spanish-language supplement, *El Nuevo Herald*, as a separate paper with its own staff and resources; the paper has become a mouthpiece for the exile leadership. And, in 1998, the *Herald* hired as its new publisher Alberto Ibargüen, the half-Cuban publisher of *El Nuevo Herald*—a friend of Mas Canosa (who had died in 1997) and a member of Mesa Redonda, the powerful civic group comprised of Hispanic community leaders. One *Herald* veteran sums up the impact of all these moves: "We quit doing tough stories."

Enter Elián. Ever since the boy arrived in Miami, the *Herald* has been careful not to anger his hosts—nowhere more so than on the editorial page. "The English-language paper gives the impression that it has been intimidated enough so it can't say something like 'There is something called the rule of law,'" says Alejandro Portes, a Cuban-American who teaches

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at Princeton. "There was no forceful editorial in the English version. For that you have to go to *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times*." Indeed, the editorial page's nadir came the day after Elián was taken from his Miami relatives' home by federal marshals, when, in a front-page editorial ordered by Ibargüen (who, it was later discovered, had hosted a conference call with Janet Reno and several negotiators in his office on the afternoon after the raid), it declared: "The scenes of overwhelming force from yesterday at dawn shock the conscience.... The evidence clearly suggests that the Miami relatives were at last prepared to voluntarily deliver Elián to his father within a very short time." Even the *Herald*'s own reporting in the following days would undermine this contention.

BUT THE *HERALD*'S reporting hasn't brought it much credit, either. On three separate occasions the paper has been scooped on stories that spoke directly to whether the Miami family was fit to care for Elián, one of the most important issues in the entire saga. In January, the *Miami New Times*, an alternative weekly, exposed the lengthy criminal records of two of Elián's Miami cousins, who were frequent visitors to the González home. Two weeks later, *The New York Times* broke the news that Lázaro González and his brother had two convictions apiece for driving under the influence of alcohol.

The day after the *Times* story, the *Herald* finally reported the criminal records of Elián's family members but framed the news in a piece on how "each side [was] seizing on any unflattering evidence, including criminal convictions and suggestions of abuse, to discredit the other." Moreover, rather than crediting the *New Times* for its exclusive on the cousins, the *Herald* gave the impression that the information had come from Castro's *Granma*.

On April 6, the *Herald* got beaten again. Fort Lauderdale's *Sun-Sentinel* reported fresh details about Lázaro González's troubled employment history. It wasn't until ten days later that the *Herald* took a hard look at Lázaro's past.

The *Herald*'s defenders say these scoops (or lack thereof) weren't reflective of the hundreds of Elián articles the paper ran covering every aspect of the case. "We wrote about the family," says Mark Seibel, who oversees much of the *Herald*'s Elián coverage, "about Cuban kids separated from parents, about how rafter kids felt about the situation, about the family's difficulty about dealing with lawyers, Marisleysis's hospitalizations, what a loving father Juan Miguel was. We wrote about everything."

But inside the newsroom, some *Herald* staffers say, the paper's best and most aggressive reporters have been attacked by a vocal minority that closely monitors suspected anti-Cuban biases. Leading the charge has been Liz Balmaseda, a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist who has complained to both the *Herald*'s publisher and its editor about what she sees as the paper's unsympathetic coverage. (Balmaseda caused an uproar herself last month when she was photographed in a prayer circle outside the González home.) Her complaints eventually led to a special meeting between Ibargüen and the paper's Cuban-American reporters.

The scrutiny didn't stop there. When reporter Meg Laughlin wrote a detailed account of Elián's private school and the right-wing textbooks used there, she came under fire from Barbara Gutierrez, the reader representative for the *Herald*, who leads a weekly critique of the paper's coverage. "The tone sounded editorial," Gutierrez says. "I think the message got through. There are certain ways of reporting a story where a community might feel it's inflammatory."

Reporter Frances Robles, who has been assigned to cover Juan Miguel González, received an e-mail message, forwarded by her editor, that was written by a more junior Cuban-American reporter who wanted to know why certain questions weren't being asked of Elián's father. "The questions were framed as if they were written by the CANF," says one *Herald* scribe. Eventually the atmosphere in the usually jocular newsroom became so strained that what reporters call unprecedented departmental meetings were held to inform journalists to refrain from any humor that could be deemed insensitive.

The tensions finally came to a head on the morning of the raid, when a Cuban-American staffer at *El Nuevo* posted a message to the newspaper's internal electronic bulletin board. Although the message was immediately taken down by the paper's managing editor, Larry Olmstead, a person inside the newsroom paraphrases it as saying: "I'm sure that you are all really enjoying what took place in Little Havana and that you'll now have lots of fun celebrating this move." The message's author then listed several reporters, now known internally as the "hit list," as the likely celebrators. Says one *Herald* reporter, "It was inflammatory, insulting, and uncalled for."

The *Herald*'s defenders say such ethnic demons are to be expected: the community itself is torn apart, and those rifts will naturally be present inside the city's newspaper. "In this conflict," says one Miami journalist, "the newspaper is just a reflection of the whole community." But that doesn't always need to be the case. In Boston, during the busing crisis of the mid-'70s, the *Globe* came under fire, quite literally, for its coverage: on various occasions, anti-busing extremists pumped bullets into the paper's headquarters. But the *Globe*'s editors stood firm, recognizing that it is at precisely such moments that a newspaper must rise above community passions to uphold certain principles. Unfortunately for Miami, the *Herald* still doesn't seem clear on what those principles are. ■

Concord Dispatch

Future Shock

By JONATHAN COHN

NEW HAMPSHIRE HAD never seen a speech quite like this. Then again, New Hampshire had never seen a constitutional crisis quite like this, either. It was April 3, and in the well of the state Supreme Court building, Chief Justice David Brock strode defiantly to the podium, stared into the TV cameras, and proceeded to attack the

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state's two other branches of government. Just days before, the state attorney general had issued an explosive report accusing Brock and his fellow judges of judicial misconduct. One justice had already resigned; the state legislature was contemplating impeachment for three others. It was Brock's turn to respond.

Many had expected contrition and perhaps an offer to step down. Instead, Brock went on the offensive. He accused the attorney general of distorting facts—and of conducting a secret investigation designed to trap the justices. Then he implied his adversaries were carrying out a partisan witch-hunt: the court's activist decisions, particularly one invalidating New Hampshire's school-funding scheme, had enraged the state's powerful right wing and put the centrist governor in a political bind. Now, Brock said, these critics were using a minor ethics squabble to exact retribution. "Recent events are intended to compromise your rights to a strong, free, and independent judiciary," Brock said, addressing the people of New Hampshire. "There are those that would govern by majority will only, against the interests of those in the minority."

Anger coursed through Brock's speech, but that wasn't its most striking feature. Its most striking feature was irony. Brock and his colleagues were in trouble because they had forced the historically lethargic New Hampshire legislature and governor to grapple with social problems created by the state's recent population growth—in effect, to act like the government of a modern cosmopolitan state rather than the government of a collection of nineteenth-century villages. And that had sparked a fierce political counterattack. But the counterattack only succeeded because the New Hampshire Supreme Court was throwing stones from a glass house. At the same time that it was pushing the other two branches of government into the future, the judiciary itself was mired deep, deep in the past.

LEGAL SCHOLARS HAVE long hailed the New Hampshire Supreme Court as a paragon of consensus. The five-judge court issues an unusually high number of unanimous opinions and lacks the stark ideological divisions that characterize larger state courts or the U.S. Supreme Court. Yet, within the state, critics have increasingly seen this penchant for harmony as evidence of the court's fundamental weakness: the fact that it is controlled by a tight-knit, politically connected legal establishment that shares a worldview and considers itself above public reproach. By tradition, say students of the state's court system, the judiciary has generally operated with no outside oversight and few formal ethics regulations, and it has handled charges of misconduct largely on its own.

To prove their point, critics cite the now-legendary case of New Hampshire Judge John Fairbanks. In 1989 Fairbanks, a 30-year veteran of the bench, was indicted for stealing nearly $2 million from elderly clients. Fairbanks fled to Canada; five years later, he turned up dead in a Las Vegas hotel room, apparently having committed suicide. A subsequent investigation uncovered allegations of additional misconduct—among other things, trading preferential rulings for sexual favors. Critics of the court system contend that Fairbanks's colleagues throughout the legal establishment hid his indiscretions by secretly dispensing with complaints as they came up. (Because many of the relevant records are sealed, the charges remain unverified.)

The Fairbanks episode damaged the judiciary's public image. But, even as the scandal made headlines, the state Supreme Court embarked on its most ambitious crusade ever—a campaign to remedy inequities in public school funding. In the highly controversial *Claremont* decisions of 1993 and 1997, the court ruled that financing schools exclusively through local property taxes was unconstitutional. Neither the governor nor the state legislature was eager to do what was necessary to remedy the problem: namely, to enact a broad-based tax that would raise more money for schools. But that was clearly what New Hampshire, whose population had long since outgrown the state's minimalist government, needed. So, while a stubborn minority of critics tried to undermine the court—last year, for example, *Claremont* opponents tried unsuccessfully to pass a "bill of address" that would have removed the sitting judges from the bench—the rest of the state government began, ever so reluctantly, to address the problem.

BUT, WHILE THE judiciary pushed the other branches of government to modernize, it continued to manage its own affairs as if it were stuck in the 1950s—as the 1998 divorce of Judith Thayer and state Supreme Court Justice Stephen Thayer would make clear. When a court handed down its final ruling, Judith Thayer felt cheated. Like other women who'd divorced members of the legal establishment, she suspected that her husband's prominent position within the state court system might have biased judges against her. So in January she appealed. And that's when the trouble began.

Because New Hampshire has no intermediate court, appeals go directly to the state Supreme Court. Since Justice Thayer couldn't hear an appeal of his own divorce ruling, Chief Justice Brock tapped George Pappagianis, a lower-court judge, as a temporary replacement. Apparently sure that Pappagianis would be unsympathetic to his case, Thayer, according to the attorney general's report, tried to change Brock's mind. First he complained to the court clerk. Then, at a regular meeting of the justices, Thayer said (according to one recollection), "You can't do that.... Just when I thought things were going to work out, this happens." The outburst was, according to those who heard it, "vociferous" and a "strenuous objection."

It was also a clear violation of judicial ethics. What's the point of recusal if you try to influence the case? Yet nobody called Thayer on it at the time, and Brock even tried to delay Pappagianis's appointment (though that may have been in deference to objections from another colleague). Only later did one justice approach Thayer to tell him his actions were "over the top" and "exactly what the public [thought the court was] doing"—meaning, presumably, that this was the kind of secret deal-making that critics of the court suspected went on all the time. That justice

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subsequently recommended that the court appoint a special counsel to consider ways of dealing with Thayer's actions. And, Brock said later, the judges were planning on reporting Thayer to the Judicial Conduct Committee all along. But the JCC reports directly to the court itself. That's one reason critics suspect that none of this would have come to light if the court clerk, who witnessed much of it firsthand, had not filed an anonymous complaint with the attorney general.

At first, only Thayer seemed in real trouble. Brock and the other justices may have reacted sluggishly to Thayer's indiscretions, but they could plausibly claim that their close personal relationship with him temporarily clouded their judgment. But the episode raised deeper questions. Why, for instance, was Thayer even participating in the discussions of a case in which he had not only recused himself but was a party to the litigation? What's more, the complaint from the court clerk suggested that this was not the first time Thayer had done this: in a previous case when Thayer had recused himself, he had seen copies of the draft decision and then discussed the matter with other judges.

When the attorney general pursued these questions, he came up with a startling answer: It had long been standard practice on the Supreme Court to keep recused justices in the loop, both in discussions of cases and in the drafting of opinions. In theory, those justices were not supposed to influence the outcome of cases. In practice, critics rightly contended, the mere fact of their presence tainted the process. Ultimately, this—more than any ideological vendetta concerning taxes—is why the attorney general published his report and why the state House subsequently voted overwhelmingly to initiate an impeachment inquiry.

When Thayer first learned of the clerk's memo to the attorney general, he is said to have told his fellow justices, "We all do it." Then he warned, "If [the clerk] files this, it's going to blow up the Supreme Court, and I'm not going to hang alone." He never made good on the threat: he ended up resigning in exchange for immunity from prosecution. And, unless the impeachment inquiry produces startling revelations of new misconduct, veteran politicos say, Brock and his colleagues will probably keep their jobs, getting off with, at worst, an official vote of censure.

That seems appropriate. If the court has been truly guilty of anything, it may not be corruption per se but insensitivity to the importance of appearances in modern judicial proceedings. And the fact that the court has already changed its rules regarding recusal suggests that the judges, including Brock, have learned their lesson. Unfortunately, the very events that seem to be modernizing the court are hindering its effort to modernize the executive and the legislature. Foes of the *Claremont* decisions are already proposing to challenge the rulings, arguing they may have been tainted by judicial bias. So the justices of the state Supreme Court may have to content themselves with reforming only one of the branches of New Hampshire government, and not the one they wanted: their own. ■

Hooray for expensive oil!

Opportunity Cost

By GREGG EASTERBROOK

AS RECENTLY AS last year, the global economy seemed awash in petroleum. Crude oil was selling for $11 per barrel; *The New York Times*' editorial page asked, "In a world brimming with oil ... should we finally stop fretting about the Middle East?" By this spring, the price per barrel had nearly tripled, and Congress was clamoring for President Clinton to release emergency oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The reason the situation changed so rapidly? Nothing more than a minor supply/demand imbalance—OPEC production ran slightly behind world purchasing.

The price surge may be a warning of things to come. Global rates of gasoline consumption are rising, while rates of new petroleum discoveries are not. The statistical barometers that in the early '70s suggested there was plenty of oil and plenty more to come now suggest there is plenty of oil but perhaps not plenty more to come. Many signs indicate that within the next ten years, global petroleum production will peak and then begin gradually to decline. And, if this winter's brief OPEC-production hiccup caused the global price of crude to triple, imagine what will happen to prices when production begins steadily to fall. "There's no danger of running out of oil, because there is enough to last at least for decades," says Steve Andrews, a Colorado energy analyst. "What we are going to run out of is cheap oil, and it will happen surprisingly soon."

Twentieth-century American prosperity was built on low-cost petroleum, and, except perhaps for its role in the greenhouse effect, cheap oil has been a blessing. There's nothing wrong with burning crude like crazy—oil isn't helping anyone when it sits in the ground—so long as there's a plan for energy alternatives when the cheap oil runs out. But, if oil prices begin a permanent increase when there are no energy alternatives ready, the economic damage could be severe. After all, it took only a temporary oil crunch to help prompt the decade-long stagflation of the '70s. Imagine what will

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happen if prices start to rise *permanently*.

This need not occur—if the United States puts its technological prowess to work developing advanced energy. Beginning the transition to a post-fossil-fuel economy would reduce demand for oil, moderating the global price. Intensive research on new forms of energy could also put America at the forefront of a key sector of the twenty-first-century economy. Unfortunately, the government isn't prodding the private sector toward such research; complacency rules energy policy. The energy crises of the '70s—when alarms were overstated and then discredited—still keep us from taking the problem of oil supply seriously. But society is now 25 years closer to oil depletion than it was when the first energy crunches began, and what is true of land is also true of the petroleum below: they aren't making any more of it.

SO FAR, THE world has burned 820 billion barrels of oil. Daily global consumption totals 75 million barrels. A century ago, a reasonable person would have called this level of use a physical impossibility. But the barrels keep getting burned, with global consumption rising at close to two percent per annum. If that rate continues, world oil use will double in 34 years, to 150 million barrels daily—which today seems, of course, physically impossible.

The statistics division of BP Amoco, which has a record of sound analysis, puts the "proved reserve"—the figure for petroleum deposits about which geologists are reasonably confident and from which oil can be extracted at reasonable cost—at slightly more than 1,000 billion barrels. At current rates of consumption, 1,000 billion barrels would cover world use for about 40 years. If consumption rises at two percent annually, that drops to 25 years.

When the "proved reserve" goes, the ground will still hold more oil—but how much is a matter of speculation. The U.S. Geological Survey recently projected that today's reserve plus "future technically recoverable oil" will total 2,100 trillion barrels, or 85 years' worth at the current consumption rate. The USGS gets that figure by making upbeat assumptions about deepwater petroleum (drilling below about 5,000 feet of ocean has become feasible only recently), polar oil (little exploration near the poles has occurred), and other sources. In short, the USGS believes the world contains 649 billion barrels of "undiscovered" oil, or several more Saudi Arabias that no one knows about yet. Potentially, there's even more—on paper the tar sands and oil shales of Canada and the "heavy" oil of the Orinoco belt in Venezuela hold at least a century's worth of petroleum. But, so far, chemists despair of extracting these sludge-consistency commodities on any commercial scale.

Whatever number is correct, the world has decades of oil ahead. What it may not have is decades of *cheap* oil. Once the production peak comes and reserve levels begin to dwindle, the supply/demand equation may shift quickly toward higher prices. The debate, then, centers on how soon the peak will be reached.

The pessimists are led by Colin Campbell, a retired Texaco geologist whose studies have been published in journals such as *Scientific American*. Campbell bases his thinking on something called the Hubbert Curve, perfected by M. King Hubbert, patron saint of petroleum geologists. Hubbert found that production tends to peak almost exactly when a petroleum reservoir hits its halfway point—meaning that once a well's output begins to decline, the amount left in the ground is roughly equal to what has been pumped out. In 1956, when oil optimism was universal, Hubbert used his curve to forecast that U.S. petroleum production would peak in 1969. The actual peak came in 1970; this dead-on prediction has given Hubbert legendary status.

Applying the Hubbert Curve to today, Campbell projects that global oil production will peak by 2010. The evidence is legion. In the United States, which contains 75 percent of the world's oil wells, petroleum production has been in decline since the 1970 peak. Prudhoe Bay, the last "elephant" oil find in the United States, peaked in 1988. Production in the former Soviet states also peaked that year. Franco Bernabe, CEO of the Italian oil company ENI, noted in 1998 that for most non-OPEC oil companies, the "reserve-to-production ratio"—how much oil the company holds for the future, compared to what it sells in the current year—has fallen from 18 to one to 12 to one.

MAJOR DISCOVERIES OF new oil are growing scarce. About 375 billion barrels were discovered in the 1960s, about 275 billion in the '70s, about 150 billion in the '80s, and fewer still in the '90s. No field with more than 27 billion barrels—one year of global consumption, at present rates—has been found anywhere since Safaniya, in Saudi Arabia, was discovered in 1951. The Gulf of Mexico, the Caspian Sea, and coastal West Africa are among today's most promising areas, but new elephants are proving elusive. When BP Amoco recently announced it had struck a major reservoir at its Crazy Horse deepwater site, 125 miles into the Gulf of Mexico, there was jubilation in Houston oil society. But Crazy Horse is a baby elephant, holding perhaps one billion barrels—enough to supply the United States for about 50 days.

In particular, the bears are pessimistic about how much oil remains in the Middle East. About three-quarters of the world's presumed "proven" oil lies in OPEC nations, and, since the mid-'80s, the cartel has claimed 287 billion new reserve barrels. This is a fantastic sum, representing more than the total amount of oil ever produced in the United States. Yet OPEC claimed the 287 billion new barrels without having made any substantial new discoveries. (The most recent big OPEC find, the Berri field in Saudi Arabia, was in 1964.) In the '80s, OPEC began to allocate production quotas based on reserves, and, in a miraculous loaves-and-fishes outcome, immediately after the change OPEC members reported extraordinary growth in reserves. OPEC's claims are not audited, which is why many analysts now call them the "political reserve."

The puffing up of Middle Eastern reserves is especially worrisome because the global oil trade increasingly depends on OPEC wells. When the cartel began its embargo in 1973, it supplied 55 percent of the world's oil. That share slipped to 30 percent by 1985, breaking the cartel's market power, but it

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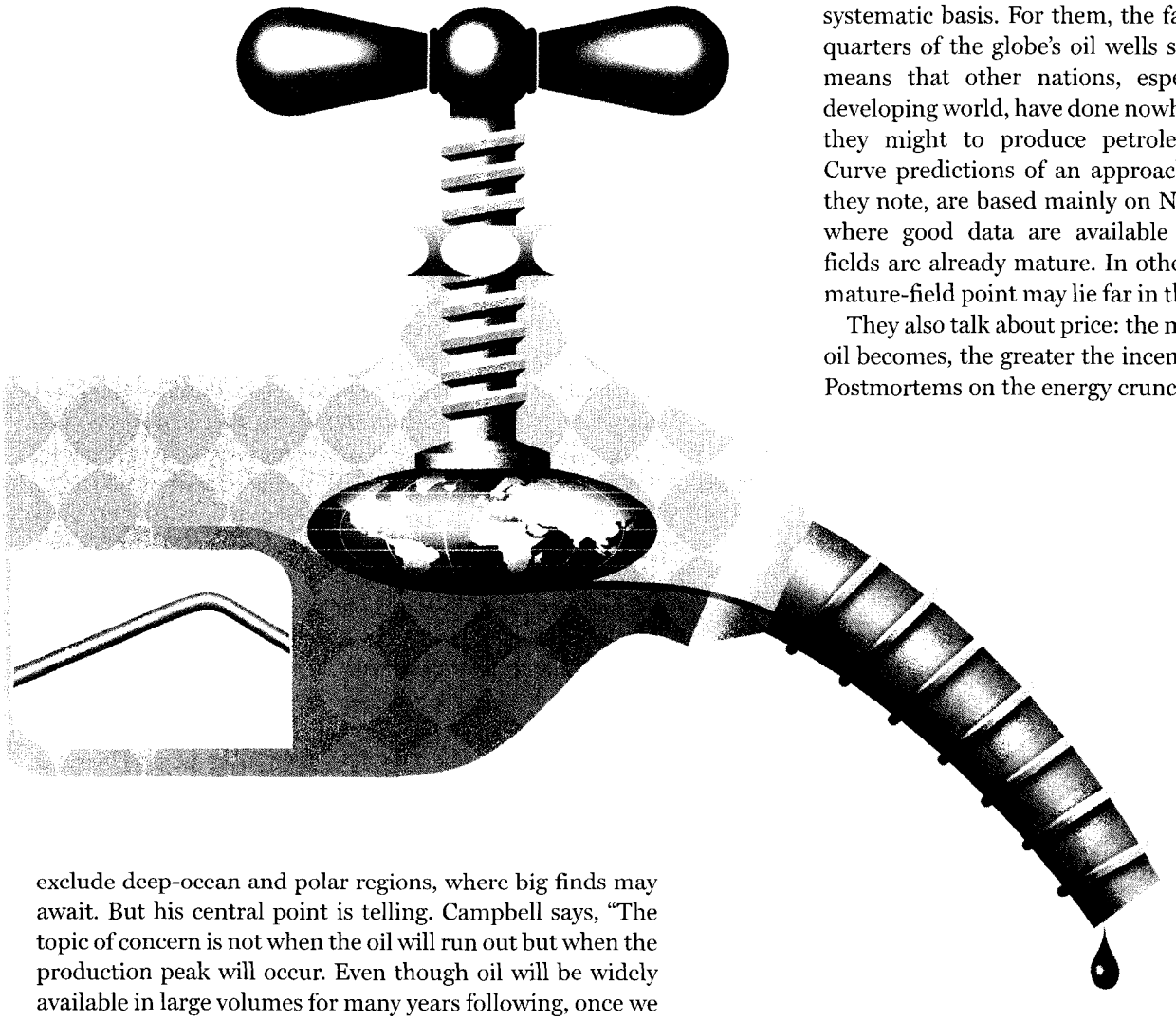
has crept back up to 42 percent. If present trends hold, the figure could hit 50 percent by 2009. If OPEC's share keeps growing and its reserve turns out to be politically inflated, the world's oil-production peak may be near, and a sharp hike in prices will likely follow.

Campbell, who thinks this is exactly what may happen, has a mixed track record. At the beginning of the '90s, he projected that oil costs would rise. Instead, with the exception of a spike when Iraq invaded Kuwait, real-dollar prices declined over the last decade. And Campbell's calculations



exclude deep-ocean and polar regions, where big finds may await. But his central point is telling. Campbell says, "The topic of concern is not when the oil will run out but when the production peak will occur. Even though oil will be widely available in large volumes for many years following, once we enter the post-peak world, everything about oil economics will change."

OCCUPYING THE OPPOSING position is Michael Lynch, a petroleum economist and lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Lynch called the '90s correctly, projecting that oil prices would mainly decline. He notes, as oil optimists like to, that when the first crunch hit in 1973—and establishment opinion held that $100-per-barrel oil was just around the corner—the world reserve amounted to 700 billion barrels. Today's reserve is larger, even though 600 billion barrels have been burned in the interim. "The empirical record is the best case for optimism," Lynch says. "We keep looking for more oil and finding more oil."

The bulls have many arguments. They remind listeners of the turn-of-the-century British alarm that coal had reached its production peak and was about to be depleted (the oil economy began in no small part because analysts believed coal was doomed). Today Britain has so much coal that closing redundant mines is a perennial political problem for Downing Street, while the U.S. coal reserve, at present rates, will last for 250 years.

Bulls aren't worried by the drop in American oil production. They say it's to be expected, because America was the first country to extract crude on a systematic basis. For them, the fact that three-quarters of the globe's oil wells sit on U.S. soil means that other nations, especially in the developing world, have done nowhere near what they might to produce petroleum. Hubbert Curve predictions of an approaching oil peak, they note, are based mainly on North America, where good data are available but most oil fields are already mature. In other regions, the mature-field point may lie far in the distance.

They also talk about price: the more expensive oil becomes, the greater the incentive to seek it. Postmortems on the energy crunches of the '70s differ, but the main cause seems to have been not OPEC shenanigans but price controls that artificially suppressed commerce. Once controls were lifted in 1979, supply rapidly improved. What's more, technology may lower the cost of production, which encourages supply regardless of price: $20-per-barrel oil looks much better to producers if extraction costs fall from $10 to $5. Public fascination with improvements in technology has fixated on Palm Pilots and the Web, but old-line industries are benefiting too. "Almost every major cost in the oil business is on a downward trend, which means, in a sense, that technology is overwhelming natural depletion," says Peter Davies, chief economist for BP Amoco.

Oil companies, for instance, have recently learned how to

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drill horizontally as far as five miles, allowing bores to take the least-cost route to an oil reservoir. Technical innovations have made it cheaper to operate in deep water, opening the central Gulf of Mexico and other blue-sea areas to exploration. Perhaps the most impressive advance is three-dimensional seismic data. Petroleum geologists figure out what is in the ground by firing seismic charges and studying the rate at which pressure waves move through strata. As recently as the '80s, a seismic "shot" would produce roll after roll of graph paper inked by bouncing needles. The rolls would be crated and shipped to analysts, who could take months or even years to process the information. And the computational limits of older computers restricted the result to a two-dimensional model of reservoir structure. Today, when an oil geologist fires a seismic shot, the result comes in digitally and is transmitted via satellite directly to an analysis center. In days or even hours, the center transmits back a detailed three-dimensional model of the oil field.

Improvements in seismology mean more oil per drilling—in the '80s, only one in ten holes struck deposits, but today it's one in two for the best companies. And, because seismic analysis is faster and cheaper, oil-field managers now perform seismic shots more often, producing models of how reservoirs change over time. This information sustains production from seemingly tapped-out fields. According to original projections, Prudhoe Bay should be depleted by now. Mainly because of advances in seismology, it's still pumping oil.

Much in the optimist/pessimist debate turns on what we don't know versus what we do. Herds of elephants may await in the deep water, and future technical advances may give us access to oil whose extraction is now prohibitively expensive. It's possible we'll have decades and decades more of low-cost oil. But there's no evidence of that—only faith in human ingenuity. The prudent wager is based on what is known. And, based on what is known, the era of cheap oil looks as if it is drawing to a close.

BUT THAT DOESN'T have to cause an energy crisis. The world's transition to an oil economy happened surprisingly quickly. The transition to an alternative-energy economy could be rapid, too. Oil companies may someday be ethanol or hydrogen companies. In fact, the progressive ones are already considering it.

Two of the majors—BP Amoco and Shell—recently dropped out of the Global Climate Coalition, founded by the fossil-fuel lobby to argue against greenhouse reforms, and joined its archenemy, the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, which advocates a national global-warming policy. (DaimlerChrysler, Ford, General Motors, and Texaco have also abandoned the Global Climate Coalition; in a masterpiece of double-talk, the coalition just announced that it is "restructuring" and will no longer accept corporate members, most of which have left anyway.) Global warming and oil depletion are different issues, but they represent a barometer of the same attitude. Greenhouse control will be impractical without a transition to a post-fossil economy, and some oil and automobile companies are willing to acknowledge this because they are positioning themselves to be corporate leaders of the next energy economy.

Alternative energy got a bad reputation in the '70s, when solar voltaics and other ideas in their infancy were oversold. But recent studies by Resources for the Future (RFF), a think tank of market economists, have shown that many forms of alternative energy, including solar power, are increasingly cost-effective. The latest wind-electricity generators, for example, make power at three to six cents per kilowatt-hour—only slightly more than fossil electricity, and way down from 38 cents per kilowatt-hour two decades ago. The reason alternative energy hasn't yet caught on, RFF believes, is that petroleum was so inexpensive in the '90s that there was no incentive to switch. If cheap petroleum departs the scene, that will change.

Consider the prospects for ethanol and methanol based on plants. Corn will not be used, because it is an input-intensive crop—given the energy that goes into growing maize, the fuel that results just barely comes out ahead in a BTU-balance calculation. (This is why perennial congressional favors to the corn-ethanol lobby have given ethanol a bad name.) Practical sources for ethanol are likely to be genetically engineered plants such as switchgrass or dwarf black cottonwood trees, which grow without tilling or fertilizer, yielding a big BTU dividend. Gene engineers are at work on microorganisms that break down cellulose—two-thirds of the plant kingdom is cellulose—into molecules that can make fuel, potentially allowing almost any plant to serve as an energy source. A new understanding of fuel chemistry would solve the engine-stalling problems associated with '70s-style "gasohol." As Robert Socolow, head of an energy study institute at Princeton, has pointed out, once cost-effective ethanol from gene-engineered plants and microorganisms becomes available, big oil companies may be happy to offer it, because the distribution structure will be similar to the one they use today—processing at central refineries and sales through existing filling stations.

Agricultural energy would be greenhouse-neutral because plants, as they grow, subtract from the atmosphere the same amount of carbon that their fuels release when burned. And agricultural fuels could be a boon to the developing world, democratizing energy commerce. Today, most developing nations are petroleum importers, an expense that drags down their economies. But almost every developing nation has an agricultural sector. If the farm became a cost-effective means of fuel production, the world's impoverished would have a potent cash crop—something affluent, well-fed Western opponents of genetically engineered agriculture might do well to ponder.

THEN THERE'S THE post-petroleum engine. Conservatives pound Vice President Al Gore for writing, in *Earth in the Balance*, that the United States should move beyond the internal combustion engine by the year 2017. Gore was wrong—it's going to happen sooner. And it will happen at the instigation of the automakers themselves. Honda and Toyota have begun marketing the first cars with "hybrid" propulsion, which combines a small-displacement piston engine with a reversible electric motor that recaptures

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energy normally lost during braking. Compact hybrid cars get 60 miles per gallon; a hybrid SUV, expected in about two years, should get nearly double the mileage of current SUVs.

Next on the list is the fuel-cell car. DaimlerChrysler is expected to be first to the market, promising a fuel-cell Mercedes in 2005. Fuel-cell cars forsake pistons and gasoline entirely for a reaction bank in which hydrogen or modified natural gas combines with oxygen to make electricity. When powered by hydrogen, these cars will emit zero smog and zero greenhouse gases—the sole substance emerging from the tailpipe will be water vapor. A decade ago, fuel cells seemed hopelessly expensive; now their manufacturing costs are dropping exponentially, the way computer-chip costs dropped in the '80s. If zero-emission, non-fossil fuel cells replace internal combustion, environmental objections to the automobile will no longer exist, and we'll *never* get rid of car culture—which is why automakers are so excited about this technology.

Meanwhile, one of the surprises of the twenty-first century may be the comeback of atomic energy, which is generated without air pollutants or greenhouse gases. Today, new nuclear plants are expensive compared to other energy forms, but that may change if oil prices rise and new modular reactor designs cut construction costs. Improved understanding of fission also makes new designs "passively safe"—engineered so they cannot melt down even if all safety systems fail. Researchers are also tinkering with nuclear fusion, which—though far from practical now—could run on seawater, holding out the possibility that the world will one day obtain an endlessly renewable, zero-emission energy form.

Suppose the fuel-cell car succeeds—where would the hydrogen come from? Hydrogen can be refined from natural gas, but the process remains fossil-dependent; it can be made in unlimited quantities from water, but that consumes electricity. The clean-energy economy of the future might use "passively safe" nuclear stations to generate the electricity that disassociates hydrogen from water (the reserve of uranium is measured in tens of centuries), with the hydrogen then piped to filling stations for use. But don't despair, foes of nuclear power: an endlessly renewable hydrogen economy could also be based on large fields of solar-electric converters providing the electricity to disassociate water.

PREPARATION FOR THE post-fossil economy needs to begin, but you wouldn't know it from Washington. President Clinton has announced a program to encourage production of new fuels, and this winter he fended off calls for oil exploration in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, saying alternative sources of energy are more important. And the president regaled Leonardo DiCaprio with tales of the compact fluorescent lightbulbs that have cut the White House electricity bill. But Clinton has not prepared America for the post-petroleum economy in any serious way. Like every president since Jimmy Carter, Clinton is terrified of looking like an energy pessimist. Congress, for its part, has opposed recent initiatives to reward energy efficiency. The practical steps government might take to encourage energy alternatives—increased gasoline taxes or "carbon taxes" on all fuels, imposed in a revenue-neutral manner so that other taxes decline—remain off the table.

American foreign policy also discourages energy alternatives. While OPEC once wielded its power as a political weapon—one aim of the 1973 embargo was to punish the West for supporting Israel—today it focuses mainly on maximizing returns for member states. Because of this, some analysts believe the cartel is embellishing its reserve in part to scare Western capital away from alternative energy. OPEC knows that a renewable-energy breakthrough would wreck its economic power—so the cartel acts as if its reserves were so great that it could flood the world with cheap oil at any time, discouraging American investment in post-fossil energy. This is one reason OPEC agreed at its most recent meeting, in Vienna, to keep the price of oil below $28 a barrel. Though the cartel generally benefits from higher prices, its members realize—as Robert Mosbacher, a Houston oil executive and former commerce secretary, has pointed out—that $30 a gallon is about where alternative fuels start to look cost-effective.

And, if OPEC exaggerates its oil reserve, the United States may exaggerate the rest of the world's. In late March, just before the Vienna meeting, as gasoline prices filled U.S. headlines, the USGS rushed out its study raising reserve estimates to the heady 2,120-billion-barrel level. Thomas Ahlbrandt, Washington's chief petroleum-assessment official, was dispatched to Paris, where he presented findings on the cornucopian amounts of undiscovered oil outside the Middle East. The point was to make OPEC think it had better fall in line or the West would find its petroleum elsewhere. Thus OPEC may be inflating its reserve to bluff the West away from alternative energy, while the West is inflating the non-OPEC reserve to bluff the cartel into docility. "Both parties have an incentive to believe the rosy scenario," Campbell notes.

IF OIL REMAINED inexpensive indefinitely, we would be foolish not to keep buying it. But that seems less and less likely. And that means America has two basic choices: Begin investing in new energy forms, staying a step ahead of OPEC and smoothing the likely transition, or wait till the next crunch hits and accept another oil-induced recession.

Here the coal analogy is worth revisiting. At the turn of the century, the anxiety was that coal would become depleted, with nothing as good to replace it. Instead, not only did something replace it, but that something—oil—was better and cleaner. Today, oil seems irreplaceable, but it is quite possible that new energy types will not only replace it but be cleaner and better as well. Eventually, Davies of BP Amoco suggests, "We may leave oil in the ground, just as considerable deposits of coal are being left in the ground because we don't really need them."

In other words, the end of cheap oil is not only likely; it may be a good thing, so long as it doesn't take society by surprise. Clinton has noted of the SUV craze, "The American people—they ... like those big vehicles. But, if they're going to drive them, we're either going to have to find a way for them to get better mileage or run on alternative fuels over the long run." He's absolutely right—there's only one catch. The long run may turn out to be a decade. ■

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Howard Kurtz and the decline of media criticism.

The Wayward Critic

By FRANKLIN FOER

HOWARD KURTZ HAS been busy. Last year *The Washington Post*'s media reporter wrote over 199 articles—more than the paper's Supreme Court reporter (130) or even its chief White House correspondent (195). Kurtz doubles as co-host of CNN's "Reliable Sources," a forum for reporters to chew over the sins of other reporters. His books on the sad decline of newspapers, talk-show blowhards, and the Clinton propaganda machine inhabit the increasingly crowded "media studies" corner of your neighborhood Barnes and Noble. (The subject covers nearly as much shelf space as philosophy in my neighborhood megastore.)

Kurtz is probably the most important media reporter in America, and with good reason. He's not only tireless; he's an unusually gifted newshound. He consistently scoops his competitors, uncovering the story behind ABC's decision to can Bill Kristol or detailing the rivalry between *Newsweek*'s Michael Isikoff and *The New Yorker*'s Jeffrey Toobin. But Kurtz sees his primary beat as media ethics, and he devotes most of his talent to uncovering apparent transgressions thereof. "The press should be held accountable, the same way they treat everybody else," he likes to say.

Some of Kurtz's discoveries are useful—for instance, his revelation that Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts received speaking fees in the tens of thousands from interest groups, like the Electronic Industry Association, that they might potentially cover. But unfortunately (or maybe fortunately) there are not enough true outrages to justify 30 columns a year, let alone hundreds. So Kurtz's exposés often seem rather picayune. He's railed against the Christmas freebies high-tech companies give the reporters who cover them. He weighed in three times on Leonardo DiCaprio's interview with President Clinton. He admonished the *New York Post* for its rough treatment of Hillary Clinton, as if he expected the unabashedly conservative newspaper to do otherwise. He questioned *Newsweek*'s hiring of liberal columnist Anna Quindlen, because she endorsed Bill Bradley's presidential bid. And, when *Roll Call* executive editor Morton Kondracke disclosed that he personally lobbied for more funding for Parkinson's research, Kurtz furrowed his brow: "Should a political columnist be asking members of Congress for their votes?" But there was a reason for Kondracke's actions: His wife suffers from the disease.

Kurtz's modern-day Victorianism is typical: a glance at the work of Steven Brill of *Brill's Content*, the *Los Angeles Times*'s David Shaw, Bernard Kalb (Kurtz's "Reliable Sources" co-host), or any of a dozen other media critics turns up the same sensibility. It's not pernicious; but it's tedious, and it trivializes journalism. And it's not the only way to write about the media. There's another tradition, now largely forgotten, that judges what's on the page, as opposed to how it got there. It was pioneered in the 1940s and '50s by the late A.J. Liebling, who considered journalism a craft and media criticism a close cousin of literary criticism. By contrast, Kurtz and the media muckrakers approach journalism the way reporters approach the Agriculture Department or the American Dental Association: as just another institution or business to follow. It makes for duller reading, not only in the columns these critics inhabit but, even more importantly, in the pages they critique.

To understand the muckrakers' mindset, look no further than Howard Kurtz's resumé. Kurtz broke into the business as an investigative journalist and made his name poking around the Reagan administration's sty in the early '80s. Each time Kurtz exposed an official, his colleagues would tack a paper fish to his desk. In the end, Kurtz had caught quite a few big fish. Brill followed a similar path—in his twenties he wrote a book exposing the Teamsters—and both men view their stints as media critics as a phase in their careers as investigative journalists. Now the media, rather than government, business, or labor, is the corrupt institution they're holding accountable. Kurtz has called the press a "remote, arrogant part of the governing elite."

It's no coincidence that so many media critics began their careers as investigative reporters. The two disciplines emerged from the womb only moments apart during the late '60s. As opposition to Vietnam increased, newspaper editors fretted that the government was deceitful (thus the need for investigative journalists) and that the press was being duped (thus the need for media critics). Outside criticism heightened their fears. The New Left decried the media's "illusion of objectivity" and complicity with the corporate establishment. So, like many other American institutions in the '60s and '70s, the media internalized the values of its critics. By employing reporters to investigate the press, the press would battle its corruption from within.

But, like so many Watergate-era reforms intended to shore up democracy's foundations, media muckraking has faltered. It has hardly restored public trust in journalism. According to a recent Kurtz column, citing a Pew Research Center poll, "a breathtaking proportion of the country thinks journalists are close to pond scum." To some degree, that's because Kurtz and his colleagues have drawn public attention to the real journalistic abuses that do occur: people like the media less because they see its dirty laundry. But, at best, that's only part of the story. In reality, journalists are far more careful about

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STEVE BRODNER

conflicts of interest today than they were in the past. The muckrakers' obsession with corruption has undermined journalism's reputation in another—less defensible—way.

Although not terribly ideological in person, today's media critics inhabit a role whose assumptions were framed by the New Left. Their writing betrays a deep materialism: it sees journalism less as a venue for independent thought than as a conduit for hidden interests. Kurtz's real problem isn't that many of the conflicts he exposes are trivial; his true sins are ones of omission. By focusing on the machinations behind the writing, he doesn't take seriously the writing itself—as a vehicle either for ideas or for beauty. And, as a result, he implicitly tells his readers that journalism is not a craft worth admiring. When I asked Kurtz about legendary columnist Walter Lippmann's well-documented friendships with politicians, he said: "I guess he came from a different era with different assumptions. But it's still beyond my comprehension. How could a good reporter put himself in that position?" What Kurtz misses is that Lippmann was foremost a thinker—he wrote to further a vision of the world. It's possible that he soft-pedaled criticisms of the pols he befriended. But to see him as corrupt largely misses the point: His friendships, like his work, stemmed not from personal interests but from a system of beliefs. Which is what Kurtz's work consistently ignores.

In the mid-twentieth century, media criticism was epitomized by a different sort of man: A.J. Liebling. From 1945 until his death in 1963, Liebling wrote the "Wayward Press" column for *The New Yorker*. Though his output didn't quite reach Kurtzian levels, he was boastful nonetheless: he could "write better than anyone who could write faster, and faster than anyone who could write better." Liebling is widely

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considered the patron saint of media criticism, and Kurtz says Liebling is his hero, too. But their approaches to the subject could not be more different.

While Kurtz and his colleagues focus on journalists' offstage antics—speaking fees, hidden conflicts of interest, the machinations of apparatchiks at Condé Nast—Liebling dwelled on the work itself. Following the lead of New Critics like R.P. Blackmur and Cleanth Brooks, his weekly essays were close textual analyses. He treated newspapers as the New Critics treated poems. He hated "colorless, odorless" prose and skewered the Columbia School of Journalism—which he believed taught bad writing—because he felt it produced journalists unworthy of the degree it conferred, the bachelor's of literature.

In nearly every one of his columns, Liebling would compare the daily newspapers' coverage of an event, like the Alger Hiss trial or Stalin's death—sorting through competing facts, poking holes in specious logic, and ridiculing bad writing. When reporters sensationalized, he zinged them. In one instance, he took the *Journal-American* to task for predicting that 100,000 anti-Communist picketers would turn out for a New York meeting featuring Soviet bloc speakers; in the end, only 150 showed up. "Calmly handled, the story would have had all the thrill of an account of a UNESCO meeting," Liebling wrote. By contrast, he praised the *Times*'s account of the panel: "[T]he best way to describe how dull a dull event is is to tell it straight; the trouble with writing ominously about this sort of thing is that you make it sound ominous, and the trouble with being amusing is that you make it sound amusing. The best way to kill Communism is to give it several pages in the *Times* every Sunday."

To be sure, Liebling broke stories. In 1948, he singlehandedly brought attention to Mississippi's plans for a secret police force, a story he found buried in the back of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*. As a result of Liebling's columns, Mississippi dropped its efforts. His classic piece "The Great Gouamba" debunked the meat shortage of 1946, a story hyped by every New York paper. But the best Liebling columns dwelled on journalism as a craft, skewering the burbles of obituaries, the vacuities of headlines, and the overwrought prose of the sportswriter ("upon small, coiled springs of fact, he builds up a great padded mattress of words").

While Kurtz is generally uninterested in the ideologies of writers (except as they reflect bias) and therefore tries to eschew ideology himself, Liebling was an unabashed liberal. He took swipes at the media's anti-unionism and its reflexive anti-communism. And Liebling didn't attack writers like Lippmann for being friends with politicians—he attacked them for their opinions.

There's no doubt Liebling could be an ungenerous critic. Much of what he read in the papers sparked, as he himself put it, "severe attacks of mental hives or prickly heat. Occasionally they verged on what psychiatrists call the disturbed or assaultative." However, if Liebling's criticism sounded grumpy, it was the voice of disappointment. Like his editors at *The New Yorker*, he maintained an almost naïve faith in the capacity of mass-circulation publications, even broadsheets, to serve as vehicles for literary prose. "I am an incorrigible optimist about newspapers," he wrote. No one reading "The Wayward Press" could deny that Liebling was critiquing a craft—even an art—that he loved.

A few contemporary critics occasionally write in Liebling's spirit—*Vanity Fair*'s James Wolcott or *The New Yorker*'s Hendrik Hertzberg among them. But Kurtz's approach is by far the dominant one, and, in comparison with Liebling's humanism, he sounds like an East German figure-skating judge, docking reporters for technicalities. His columns are filled with small (if not banal) complaints cast as large insinuations. When CNN and NPR announced they would no longer hire interns from the Army's Psychological Operations Unit, Kurtz said the old practice "rais[ed] questions about the news organizations' independence from the military establishment they cover." Even when reporters acknowledge their potential conflicts of interest, it's usually not enough to satisfy Kurtz. In his March 27 "Media Notes," he reported that "60 Minutes" followed an upbeat piece on iVillage.com with the disclosure that the segment's producer had gone on to a job at the e-business. They disclosed it. So why did Kurtz need to disclose it again?

What Kurtz doesn't cover is prose and ideas. A column last August arguing that David Remnick had reinvented *The New Yorker* didn't describe any of the pieces the new editor had commissioned. Or consider a lengthy, puffy profile of *Weekly Standard* staff writer Tucker Carlson, which included only a few phrases of Carlson's writing. Instead, Kurtz dwelled on Carlson's TV persona, and the result was predictably superficial. "Carlson views journalism like his favorite college pastime, hitchhiking: a ticket to meeting interesting people," Kurtz wrote. "And despite his multimedia commitments, he doesn't worry about spreading himself too thin—for now."

Kurtz's inattention to the writing itself often gives his criticism a "forest for the trees" quality. He has barely taken note of the dumbing-down of once-middlebrow magazines like *GQ* and *Esquire* as they have tried to compete with the new breed of raunchier men's magazines, like *Maxim*. He has barely struggled with the civic-journalism fad—and the vision of the press that it embodies. And, although he has covered mergers, his discussion of media consolidation has amounted to little more than perfunctory quotes from Kalb. He writes about the potential for corruption and the impact of the bottom line, but he doesn't write about how the melding of different journalistic cultures changes the way reporters and editors think.

Compare the way Kurtz writes about journalism to the way *The Washington Post*'s book critics review books, or the way its movie critics dissect film, or even the way its TV critic writes about television. The others view their mediums as vehicles for discussing the ideas conveyed in the works. To focus only on the production process would be considered crude, an attack on the idea that books and movies and TV shows represent forms of art. All of which raises a strange and troubling question, the kind of question you'd like a media critic to ask: What does Howard Kurtz's coverage of the press say about the *Post's* view of itself? ■

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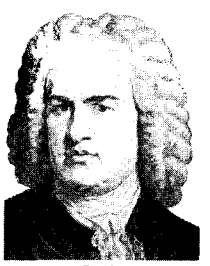

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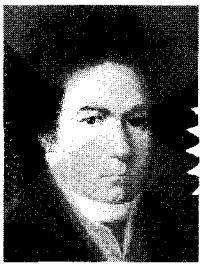

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Youth and Other Puzzles

RECENTLY I ASKED a physician friend—a woman with two adolescent sons—how her boys were. She crossed her fingers and said that she didn't like to talk about them, she was afraid she'd jinx things, but they were doing well. Her reply, implying that her sons were in a rite of passage she could only watch and hope about, was a warrant of mystery. That mystery is the core of **The Virgin Suicides** (Paramount Classics).

This exceptional, arresting film is about the suicides of five adolescent sisters, children of a caring high school teacher and his equally caring wife, in a Michigan town twenty-five years ago. (Clothes and cars and music fit the period, but it's not clear what relevance the time has to the action. Nothing essential about that action is out of date today.)

The story begins with the attempted suicide of the youngest girl, who is thirteen, and ends, as the title predicts, with the deaths of all of them. Yet, in the conventional sense, the film is not "about" those suicides. The daring of the story, its paradoxical achievement, is that it explains nothing. At the end, we know little more of the reasons for the five deaths than we did at the beginning. Nobody knows. One of the voices on the soundtrack, an adult who is an adolescent in the story, tells us, twenty-five years later, that nothing has been learned to explain the horror. Certainly we have seen no harsh cause in the family's life. If the parental discipline imposed here was the cause, then a great many families are at risk. But the lack of bald reason is precisely the point of the film. In the most frightening sense, not gross terror but sheer dailyness, *The Virgin Suicides* is a mystery.

The director thus faced difficulties: how to keep the film interesting while it moves through its high-school commonplaces and how to make us feel later that we have been treated adequately, not frustrated. These directing difficulties are so adroitly overcome that we confront a marvel. This is a debut film, directed by Sofia Coppola, who made her own screenplay from a novel by Jeffrey Eugenides (unread by me). Allow that her father, Francis Coppola, who was one of the producers, probably advised; allow that Edward Lachman's cinematography and the editing by James Lyons and Melissa Kent were constants on which a new director could rely; still, this film was certainly not made by a novice who merely took advice. That is what takes our breath away. This is a first film, yet it is so subtle, so rife with taciturn empathy, with heartsick courage, that there must have been a true talent at the helm in the service of bewilderment.

It begins with an odd sequence—of the ordinary and the shocking. We see Lux, the oldest of the five daughters, finishing a Popsicle; then a man sprays a lawn; then there are a few more glimpses of leafy streets and comfy houses. Then a person is carried out of a room by ambulance people. One drop of blood on the floor hints at the occasion. Then Cecilia, the thirteen-year-old, is lying in a hospital bed with bandaged wrists. How calmly we have been given context and exception; how irresistibly we are hooked.

There is a strangeness in what follows, and it's the one possible clue to future troubles: the family's attitude toward Cecilia when she gets home. No fuss is made about what Cecilia did; no one discusses it. No air of guilt or irruption hangs in the house. In fact—an unemphasized masterly touch—when the sisters give a party a few weeks later, gaily colored wristlets are wrapped around Cecilia's bandages. This decor, however, doesn't deter her postponed intent. (To repeat: the title predicts all.) What's even more insidiously startling, after Cecilia's death, life in the house goes on pretty much as it had done. There is mourning for a time, and the iron railing on which she landed is removed from the front of the house, and the high school assembly hears pronouncements about suicide rates in America. But neither the four remaining sisters nor their friends, especially their boyfriends, dwell on—they hardly mention—the suicide. This behavior is shown as natural, not perverse.

Adolescent glands keep blooming. Lux stays out all night with a boyfriend after a high school dance. (Virginity unaltered, we assume.) As a result, the parents ground the four girls: no dates at all. A few weeks later, when their parents are asleep—not even out of the house—the girls bring boyfriends in stealthily. The boys are not invited for smooching but to witness four more suicides.

We see little of the parents thereafter. We see the emptied house as we are told that the parents have moved. We're also told that, twenty-five years later, the horror is still not explained. Any viewer remotely aware of adolescent behavior will writhe in fright and recognition.

Coppola has treated her story with exquisite discretion, almost like music played with mutes. She is not out to break our hearts but to coil us in the society where all these anomalies occur. One instance of the way she synthesizes the world and the event is the exterior shot when the ambulance people take away Cecilia's body. They are in a corner of the foreground: the house—the prettified locus of the death—is in the background. Later, there's a high overhead shot of Lux waking up in the dawn, sprawled in the middle of the school athletic field, her mild sexual adventure having left her cold and alone. (Along with Coppola's graces, I must also note one lesser moment, quite out of key with the film. When Lux is leaving for the dance earlier that evening, the camera travels down her dress to her hips, and an insert shot shows us that she has lettered her boyfriend's name on her panties. That insert shot is a silent-film comedy trick.)

One puzzling element in the film is its handling of Catholicism. The family is pointedly shown as Roman Catholic, and that church's view of suicide is clear. (Another Catholic, Hamlet, wished that "the Everlasting had not fixed His canon 'gainst self-slaughter.") After Cecilia's death, the family's priest tells them that he is recording it as an accident, presumably so that she can be buried in consecrated ground. Yet no mention is ever made by anyone that Cecilia's action and the subsequent actions contravene their religion.

The girls who play the girls are all appropriately dewy and, except for Cecilia, ebullient. Kristin Dunst, as Lux, stands out because she has the largest role. The versatile James Woods does what he can with the least well-written part, the astigmatic father who is almost aggressively boring. (Except for one late moment when he seems to have flipped.) Kathleen Turner, thirty pounds past her former sexiness, is maternally assured. But the real star is Sofia Coppola. She has made a film that reads no lesson, whose

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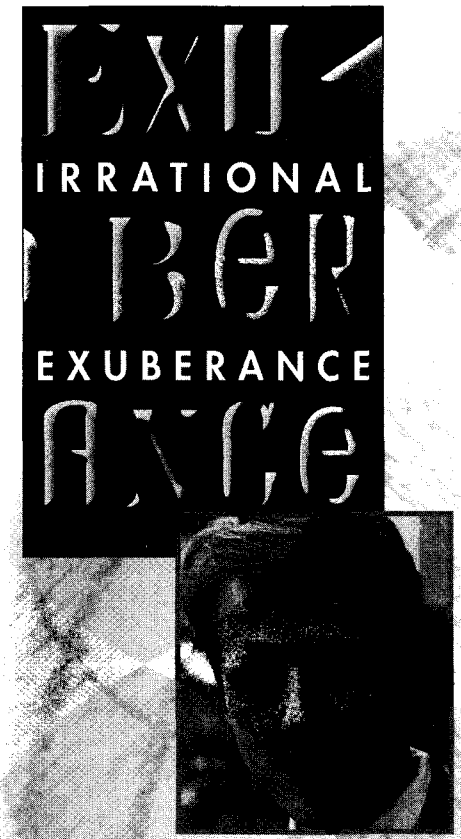

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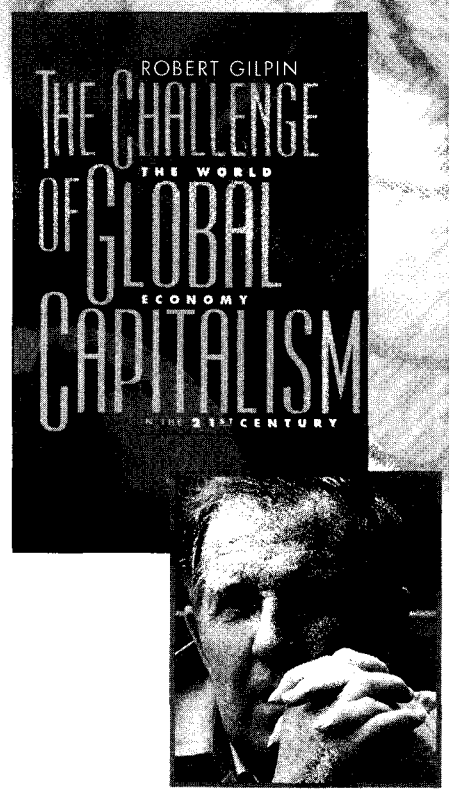

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purpose is—under the aspect of the diurnal—to mystify.

W. Somerset Maugham, a polished and popular novelist, short-story writer, and playwright through much of the last century, published still another book shortly before he died in 1965, and W.H. Auden reviewed it. Maugham was nowhere near Auden's literary stature, yet the latter's review, almost like a letter to the older man, was appreciative of Maugham's writings without patronization. Auden concluded, as I recall: "Thank you for never having bored us."

I wonder if Auden had ever read the Maugham novella, published in 1940, from which **Up at the Villa** (USA) is adapted. If so, Auden might have made it an exception. This is one of the very few Maugham pieces I know that lacks "privileged" insights into its people, glittery or grim, and whose turns of plot provide no gratifying surprise. (Maugham was good at the sort of surprise that is logical and that throws a backward light on the story.) More: the novella's setting is irrelevant. It deals with Britons and Americans in Tuscany during the 1930s, but, unlike the recent *Tea with Mussolini*, the political atmosphere has nothing to do with the story. Though an Austrian refugee from Hitler figures in the plot, he could have been any kind of rootless, pathetic person.

Yet it was this novella that Philip and Belinda Haas chose to film, he as director, she as screenwriter. They previously made two exceptional films, *The Music of Chance* from Paul. Auster and *Angels and Insects* from A.S. Byatt, both of which were works of taste and depth. *Up at the Villa* shows neither. A young English widow, about to accept the proposal of an elderly diplomat, impulsively allows a young man—that refugee—to spend the night with her. This leads to complications that greatly alter his life and hers. All we are left with is the consequences of a misstep, neither an ingenious story nor a wry one, both of which had been usual Maugham characteristics.

Philip Haas battered his film further with peculiar casting. The widow is played by Kristin Scott Thomas, who has shown talent—in *The English Patient*, for instance—but is here seriously put before us, and badly photographed, as a woman whose beauty is called extraordinary. Sean Penn plays an urbane international playboy and seems bemused by the very idea. Anne Bancroft, as the elderly American widow of an Italian prince, comes across as a Bronx salesperson at a fancy-dress ball. Derek Jacobi, always welcome, is attractive as an English layabout in Florence but has too small a part to help much. The best of the cast is Jeremy Davies, previously notable in *Spanking the Monkey* and *Saving Private Ryan*, who gives the refugee some texture.

Mr. and Mrs. Haas are serious and capable film-makers. This time they picked a lemon and soured it further with the casting. Here's to next time. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

Women in the Theater

There was a time, not that long ago, when you could count the number of truly gifted women in our theater on the broken fingers of one mutilated hand. Of course, there was never any shortage of terrific actresses, but what female playwrights could you name other than Susan Glaspell, Sophie Treadwell, and Lillian Hellman? Who among directors apart from Margaret Webster? Who among artistic administrators after Hallie Flannagan Davis, Nina Vance, and Zelda Fichandler? I'm sure someone can identify other worthy exceptions to this generalization that I'm too foggy to remember, but the point is that, with women now making up an important creative core of the American theater, you no longer need to look for exceptions. Female theater artists are abundant and not just segregated in feminist enclaves, doing plays on women's issues. They constitute some of our most brilliant writers, directors, choreographers, and designers, and they hold key producing positions in the nonprofit and commercial theaters.

Emily Mann of the McCarter Theatre in Princeton is among a cadre of women now heading major nonprofit theaters across the nation. Some other mainstream female artistic directors are Carey Perloff at the American Conservatory Theatre, Anne Hamburger at the La Jolla Playhouse, Molly Smith at the Arena Stage, Irene Lewis at the Center Stage, Lynne Meadow at the Manhattan Theatre Club, Martha Lavey at Steppenwolf, Tina Packer of Shakespeare and Company, and Sharon Ott at the Berkeley Rep, not to mention Elizabeth LaCompte, still at the helm of the adventurous Worcester Group, and such former artistic leaders (at the New York Public Theatre and the Trinity Rep) as JoAnne Akalaitis and Anne Bogart.

Mann, a Harvard graduate, has been running the McCarter since 1990. Talented both as a playwright and as a director, she is presently being represented on American stages not only with her adaptation and production of **The Cherry Orchard** at the McCarter, but with her touching adaptation of *Meshugah*, Isaac Bashevis Singer's semi-autobiographical tale of sexual obsession after the Holocaust, recently staged in an engaging production by Oskar Eustis at the Trinity Rep in Providence. Both works reflect her deep engagement with social issues.

Mann's *Cherry Orchard* features an abstract geometric design by Adrienne Lobel, a combination of wing-and-border scenery and floating white panels framed in cherry wood that dislocate the play from its traditional Slavic setting. True, the characters have been allowed to retain their period clothes (designed by Jennifer von Mayrhauser) and their Russian patronymics, but the adaptation and the casting suggest that this country estate may have been moved from provincial Russia to the American South some time after the Civil War.

There are no references to serfs or serfdom in Mann's *Cherry Orchard*—nor for that matter to slaves or slavery. But many of her choices suggest that the "emancipation" referred to in her version was ordered not by Czar Alexander II but by President Abraham Lincoln. Joshua Logan once attempted the same sort of geographical transformation for *The Cherry Orchard* in a play he called *The Wisteria Trees*. Emily Mann's version is more successful for being less specific. You can interpret it as a commentary on the way the gentry were yielding power to the middle classes in turn-of-the-century Russia—or you can see it as a history of race relations in America from the nineteenth century to the present.

Mann has included African Americans in the cast not, as is customary in classical productions, to play nontraditional (or

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color-blind) roles, but rather as conspicuous examples of a racial and social divide. Firs, the old retainer, is black. So is Varya, the housekeeper, and so is Lopahin, that successful son of a bondsman (the house servants Yasha and Dunyasha, on the other hand, for reasons that escape me, are Caucasians). Firs, played with endearing absentmindedness by Roger Robinson in a full white beard and under a shock of white hair, is clearly meant to recall Uncle Tom, especially when he is showing excessive concern for his white master, Gaev, or expressing nostalgia for the halcyon days "before the catastrophe—before freedom" ("those were great old days," Trofimov retorts, "lots of whippings anyway").

By contrast, Lopahin, as performed by that resonant actor Avery Brooks, seems to represent the modern black entrepreneur. He has gotten very rich very quickly and hasn't yet learned the manners that go with his wealth (Gaev's contempt for Lopahin's crudeness and for his "cheap cologne" here verges on racism). Lopahin is urged to marry Varya (Caroline Stefanie Clay) because "she loves you and she's your sort." But he is clearly carrying the torch for Ranevskaya, his white patroness.

Come to think of it, Yasha and Dunyasha may have been cast with white actors because they are less sympathetic than the other servants. Yasha (Jefferson Mays), especially, is even more detestable in this production than usual. He shows no respect for his elders or his superiors, he smokes foul cigars you can smell throughout the auditorium, and, in the second act, he practically rapes Dunyasha on stage. Indeed, in the last act, weeping bitterly at Yasha's impending departure, Dunyasha falls to her knees and undoes his fly, in preparation for fellating him—a telling demonstration of how this future commissar has been treating his women. I was prepared to argue with the easy racial equations of Mann's *Cherry Orchard* as contrary to Chekhov's more complicated sense of human character. But while I questioned some of Mann's choices at times, at least her interpretation was one that provoked debate. Both in her adaptation and her staging, she had freshly rethought every moment of the play.

And her production was also very confidently acted. Jane Alexander brought a preternatural graciousness and serenity to the role of Ranevskaya, possibly leavened by years of controlling herself before congressional committees. Avery Brooks's performance eventually won me over, though in the early scenes he lacked some of Lopahin's vulnerability and warmth, while his reverberating basso belonged more to the noble Othello than to a clumsy self-made man. John Glover, looking like a swashbuckling John Wilkes Booth with his cavalry moustaches, flowing scarf, and cutaway coat, also managed to convince me at last that he inhabited the character of the escapist Gaev, spiritually if not physically. Rob Campbell was a compact ball of wire as Trofimov, and Anne Dudek presented a winsome Anya. But the actor who truly engaged me was Barbara Sukowa playing Charlotta, the governess. Expert in demonstrating her magic tricks, she demonstrated even more effectively how her lonely life in exile was bringing her close to breakdown. Among a talented if somewhat frosty ensemble, Sukova revealed the delicately poised poignance of a warm-blooded woman wasting her life.

Mann's adaptation includes a second-act scene that Chekhov cut at Stanislavsky's urging, in which Firs tells Charlotta how he once spent two years in prison as a result of false arrest. This version also brings on Grisha—the child who drowned while the charming and feckless Ranevskaya was busy making love—turning him into a ghostly presence, an innocent little boy with a balloon, subtly rebuking the irresponsibility of the household. Both of these interpolations were used by Lucien Pintillie in his Arena Stage version of *The Cherry Orchard* in 1988. It was nice to see them again here in a production so notable for its intelligence, style, and grace.

Julie Taymor has brought to Broadway her off-Broadway production of Carlo Gozzi's **The Green Bird**, with all of the same gifted designers and most of the inspired original cast. It makes for an equally enchanting and even more scenically spectacular evening of theater. I reviewed this piece with enthusiasm in 1996 when it was first produced by the Theatre for a New Audience. It is not my habit to rereview productions that move from one venue to another, and I won't do so here. But it might be useful to speculate about why the same artist who triumphed on Broadway with *The Lion King* was unable to win over the major reviewers with *The Green Bird*, a far more brilliant fairy tale written by a far more imaginative playwright.

It is true that this *Green Bird* has its longueurs. There may be one too many journeys, two too many magical transformations, three too many *coups de théâtre* to constitute a perfect theatrical journey. About half an hour over length, it might well have benefited from some curbs on Taymor's abundant imagination. Still, the production is an unmitigated delight for eyes and ears, and it has some of the most funky low-comedy acting and writing I have witnessed since Minsky went out of business and vaudeville closed its doors.

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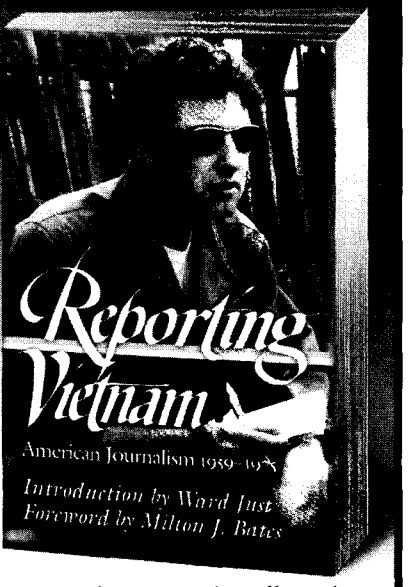

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And that may be a reason for the muted critical response. A culture that gives the Pulitzer Prize to a tame domestic animal like *Dinner With Friends* is probably not prepared to embrace a fantastical play or a phantasmagoric production, especially when it flies on stage without the Disney imprint. Also, for some reason I fail to understand, there seems to be a general consensus in the reviewing community these days that slapstick and burlesque are inferior forms of theater—most critics, like Goldsmith's Tony Lumpkin in *She Stoops to Conquer*, usually don't like anything that's "low."

Low comedy, farce, vaudeville, and burlesque, on the other hand, though often banished from the stage at a time when sentiment is on the rise, have always been among the most vibrant forms of theater, from Aristophanes to Ionesco, from commedia dell'arte to the Marx Brothers. In Taymor's *Green Bird*, these forms are momentarily finding renewed life on a commercial stage where great clowns like Bobby Clark, Jimmy Savo, Bert Lahr, Sid Caesar, and Milton Berle once were kings. That this kind of virile, often erotic buffoonery is now being created by a woman (feminists have been known to scorn it as demeaning to their gender) is yet another example of how women are achieving true parity with men in every aspect of the American theater. ■

Economies of Truth

By ROBERT M. SOLOW

The Nature of Economies by Jane Jacobs

(Modern Library, 190 pp., $21.95)

THE ONLY OTHER book by Jane Jacobs that I have read is *The Economy of Cities*. I liked it. She was in favor of human-scale neighborhoods, street life, creative messiness, and—most especially—diversity. (Ethnic diversity, too, I suppose; but in context mainly the proliferation of small enterprises that complement each other.) She was against company towns, uniformity induced by zoning, buildings unfriendly to passersby, sterile orderliness, and excessive bureaucratic planning generally. It was an attractive vision of urban life.

But I also seem to remember a liking for broad generalizations, sweeping readings of history, and excessive certainty about complex issues. Unfortunately, those tendencies have become more obtrusive in Jacobs's new book. The form of the work does not help. Jacobs has cast the book as a "didactic dialogue" among four friends and the father of one of them. The text is all stilted conversation, pedantic monologues, and the occasional cutesy touch. If Socrates had talked like Hiram Murray IV, Plato would be unremembered today.

What a book is really about can sometimes be deduced from what it is against. Jacobs is clear about that. She says in her foreword that her basic premise is that "human beings exist wholly within nature as a legitimate part of the natural order in every respect." Yet economists, industrialists, and politicians assume that "reason, knowledge, and determination make it possible for human beings to circumvent and outdo the natural order." We have this, again, on Hiram's authority, as early as page ten: "[N]ature affords foundations for human life and sets its possibilities and limits. Economists seem not to have grasped this reality yet."

Not a single economist I know—and I know a lot of them—thinks that human beings can circumvent or outdo the natural order. Most of them would have a hard time even figuring out what that phrase could possibly mean. If you observe something that had been thought impossible (that is, outside the natural order), you may begin by being skeptical about the observation; if it is confirmed, however, you will revise your beliefs about nature.

I will try not to keep saying this, but Jacobs and her characters display a vast ignorance of what "economists" think and do. Early on, for example, the insufferable Hiram explains that "the law of diminishing returns is truthful and harsh, but it explains little about economic life in the absence of the converse law, which we might call the law of responsive substitution, meaning that people seek or contrive substitutes for resources that have become too expensive." You would never know from this speech that every student of economics is lectured and textbooked nearly to death about the ubiquity of price-induced substitution: between chicken and pork, between aluminum and stainless steel, between imports and home goods, between labor and leisure. This ignorance is symptomatic. A book about the nature of economies ought to have a minimal grasp of the discipline it claims to be overturning. This one does not.

WHAT IS THE nature of economies, and what should economics be about? We are not told in so many words, but have to pick up the implied answer by osmosis. Jacobs is enthralled and persuaded by the way in which evolution creates new species, and alters organic form within species. Generally, she says, a specialized form emerges from a more general form because it provides a better adaptation to the local and current environment. This progressive differentiation is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. And "environment" in this context is not limited just to climate, terrain, and other such inorganic facts. Whole collections of species co-evolve, changes in some providing the opportunity for, and the payoff to, adaptive changes in others. Species form a developing web.

One can see why Jacobs is so delighted by this way of describing evolutionary development. It bears a clear family resemblance to her way of describing healthy economic development in cities or—as she likes to say—in settlements: the proliferation and the (limited) growth of small-to-medium sized firms, finding niches opened by changes in consumer demand, and grasping opportunities to supply one another, exchanging information along with goods and services. This is certainly one important, interesting, and satisfying route to economic development.

If this is what economies do, then presumably economists ought to study this process. But here a problem arises that does not seem to occur to Jacobs and her characters. This sort of naturalist thinking by analogy has built-in limitations. Suppose you see things through Jacobs's eyes: the proliferation and the development of interdependent manufacturing and service enterprises looks a lot like the proliferation and co-development of plant and animal colonies and species. And you can stop there; or you can try to go one step deeper and understand more.

If you take the next step, you will see

ROBERT M. SOLOW is Institute Professor Emeritus of Economics at MIT. He won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1987.

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that there is absolutely no reason to presume that the detailed mechanisms underlying economic dynamics are the same as those that describe ecological dynamics. On the contrary. There are convincing reasons to expect them to be different. Economic behavior is largely conscious, forward-looking, theory-infested, goal-directed, sometimes when the goal is distant and indirect. The behavior of plants and other animals is much less so, or not at all. By the way, I am not certain that Jacobs is much better informed about ecology. The works that she cites are mostly journalism or popularizations. She would find that what working ecologists actually do is mainly narrow, technical, and dreary. Many of their methods are in fact borrowed from economics.

IT IS INTERESTING that economists and ecologists often use similar mathematical tools in doing their work. This is partly because those are the mathematical tools that we have, and partly because fitness-driven evolution and conscious but myopic goal-seeking work along similar lines, though their content and significance can be very different. Mussels tend to wipe out other species in certain intertidal zones. Understanding how they do so will not help anyone to understand why some industries take hold and flourish in East Asia, while others merely cling precariously to existence and still others disappear. There is no harm in thinking of industrial succession and survival as an evolutionary process energized by the pressure of selection. The mistake is to believe that this thought comes anywhere near exhausting the intellectual problem. Economic dynamics on this scale is not to be understood without recourse to culturally induced norms of entrepreneurial behavior, the lore of investment banking, the content of popular business-school courses, and many other things not characteristic of mussel populations.

"Development depends on co-development," says Hiram (in italics). I think that every development economist already knew that. More to the point, the statement offers no clue at all about where to look for the operative mechanism. In economics, the vocabulary emphasizes "externalities," and "forward and backward linkages," and input/output tables. But Jacobs does not seem to be interested in actual economic (or, for that matter, ecological) analysis. She is content to stop with the naturalist analogy itself, and with the comfort and the satisfaction it brings.

Perhaps that is just as well. At least it makes for a useful respect for the sort of small- and medium-scale, indigenous, adaptive, knowledge-based enterprises without which, for example, we would all be eating Wonder Bread. That may be all that Jacobs wants from us. Hiram, however, is more ambitious. And when he tries to pass from generalities about ecology to the understanding of economic behavior, the result is often not good.

HE LAUNCHES, FOR example, a confused and poorly informed disquisition on the relation of local (neighborhood, city, region, nation) economic activity to exports and imports. This is a topic that has been discussed for at least 200 years, beginning with David Ricardo or even earlier, and most recently in a new book by Paul Krugman, Anthony Venables and M. Fujita, called *The Spatial Economy: Cities, Regions and International Trade.* These authors do not stop with a few little parables. Instead they try to model explicitly the interplay of persistent forces like scale economies, transportation costs, and demand patterns in determining the geography of economic activity. You would think that a few useful thoughts about patterns of trade might have occurred to the likes of John Stuart Mill, Alfred Marshall, Jacob Viner, Bertil Ohlin, James Meade, and Gottfried Haberler, to name just a few. But Hiram (and, even more oddly, his father, who is described as an economist) seems to have overlooked this.

The focus on exports and imports may press the wrong buttons, especially in a local context. Imagine a small isolated island, with some pattern of economic activity, but no outside contact. You would not think to speak of imports and exports, and the annual economic report would show none. Now draw an arbitrary line down the middle of the island, and divide it between East Island and West Island. All of a sudden there are "exports" and "imports," even if there has been no change at all in the pattern of economic activity. The volume of measured imports depends on the essentially arbitrary location of the boundary.

The more basic question is: why is the composition of economic activity not uniform over the face of the earth? Why is there specialization or geographical division of labor at all? The obvious reason is local variation in climate, terrain, transportation possibilities, the availability of natural resources, and so on. Equally important is the presence of "increasing returns to scale." It is a technological fact that some kinds of production can be carried on most efficiently at fairly high volume, high enough so that more is produced than the local market will absorb at a price that covers costs. So regions specialize; they sell part, and maybe most, of their output to other regions, and in exchange they buy the products of other regions.

In the modern world, moreover, specialization may also arise from purely historical happenstance. A city begins to produce hair dryers for some accidental reason. It has no fundamental cost advantage over other regions. But it moves down its learning curve, gets a slight jump on technological improvements as they arise, attracts complementary businesses, and pretty soon it has built up a cost advantage that an upstart region would find hard to overcome.

Regions import consumer goods, of course, but also raw and semifinished materials which are then worked up and reexported. Hiram invents the term "import-stretching" to describe this process. But it is just the commonplace operation of "adding value." It happens all the time, whether or not "imports" are involved; intermediate goods pass from one firm to another. Good old Hiram regrets that statistical agencies perversely do not calculate and report the economic indicator that he wants: the ratio of import-stretching to the sum of import-stretching and resource use. But the numerator of this ratio is in actual fact calculated wherever it is reasonably convenient to do so: the aggregate of value-added within a region is called the gross product of a region. The Department of Commerce does it by state. It would be rather too expensive and intrusive to calculate it for a city or an even smaller unit. As for the denominator, imports are hard to measure except where there are barriers to trade. How would one measure the total flow of imports into Hoboken? If Hiram's father, who lives there, gets a haircut in Jersey City, he is importing a service. Should we care?

Then Jacobs introduces yet another murky concept of dubious interest. She calls it "self-refueling." This seems to mean the act of "capturing" additional imports, either by increased processing of existing imports into reexports or by replacing some current imports with (not necessarily identical) local production, so that different imports can be financed out of unchanged exports. What this has to do with fuel, and why it is either good or bad (or how much would be the right amount), is never made very clear. Some diversification of local production is, of course, likely to help raise the sustainable standard of living. Too much diversification risks dissipating the advantages of scale. The ability to compete with producers elsewhere is a useful indicator of the efficiency of the local industry. On none of this does Jacobs's book offer any novelty; but it makes up for that with obscurity.

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In the end, I do not think that *The Nature of Economies* tells us much about the nature of economies, beyond the pun itself. The collection of analogies does not add up to very much. Some of them are superficial, for the reason already mentioned. Some may be deep—that is, they may reflect some behavioral equivalence—but there is no way to know which ones. What we get is a reminder that one element of the quality of life, probably more so at a fairly high level of income, is the health of mutually supporting, small-scale, local, market-oriented productive activity. Promoting the health of this sector of the economy may require presumptions and institutions different from those typical of large-scale capitalism. (It may be possible, though certainly not easy, to recreate some of this activity tucked away inside a larger firm.)

Those truths are easy to overlook in the care and feeding of a modern economy, and Jacobs does well to keep reminding everyone. Yet there is no sign that she has asked herself the questions that should preoccupy someone with this particular mission. Working against the artisan and niche producer are the economies of large-scale production. I can not guess what may be possible with future technology; but for now it is clear that cost per unit falls with increasing plant size in many lines of production. This does not go on forever; in most cases, unit costs begin to rise again as the plant gets big enough to be unwieldy. In some industries, "optimal" plant size will be pretty large.

Are there regulatory and other forces in our economy that tend to favor excessively large plants or place unnecessary obstacles in the way of smaller establishments? Could some regulations actually favor excessively small businesses? More generally, what is the proper domain of large-scale production? Where is it genuinely efficient? What would constitute a fair or level playing field on which the relative advantages of small-scale and large-scale production could compete for the allegiance of workers and consumers? How could public policy favor its creation? Not you, Hiram. Let someone else talk. Please. ■

Nazism and the complicities of Hans-Georg Gadamer.

Untruth and Method

By RICHARD WOLIN

I.

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, Hans-Georg Gadamer has been, in the fitting words of an encomium written on the occasion of his ninety-fifth birthday, "the most successful philosopher of the Federal Republic [of Germany]." Born in 1900 in the Silesian town of Breslau (in February he celebrated his hundredth birthday), Gadamer's autobiography recounts a tranquil boyhood punctuated by convulsive technological change: "the transition from gas to electric lighting, the first automobiles ... the first Zeppelin over Breslau, the sinking of the Titanic." When his father, a chemistry professor, compared the fabled aquatic catastrophe to the devastation of an entire village, the worldly youth responded (insensitively, by his own admission): "Oh well, just a bunch of farmers." A contrite apology to the family housekeeper, who had been listening in the wings nearby, was promptly demanded.

The most influential event of Gadamer's boyhood was his intellectual pilgrimage to Marburg, the legendary bastion of neo-Kantianism; but then two events in the 1910s combined to shatter the neo-Kantian trust in the trinity of reason, science, and progress. The war came, and the great neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen died. In 1919 Cohen's posthumous *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* appeared, a heroic attempt to reconcile Jewish monotheism with the rationalist ethos of the high Enlightenment as embodied in the philosophy of Kant. In retrospect Cohen's magisterial work seems emblematic of the inability of Enlightenment ideals to penetrate the murky depths of the German "soul," and of the tragic failure of German-Jewish efforts to assimilate. The moment it appeared, Cohen's treatise already seemed anachronistic: a tattered promissory note from a more hopeful era.

For the youth of this period, it became urgent that the mentality which had facilitated the European conflagration be overthrown at all costs. A full-fledged Nietzschean "transvaluation of values" was underway. Thus, in 1919, as the young Gadamer established his new philosophical base, a variety of iconoclastic cultural influences permeated the otherwise subdued corridors of university life, ideas and orientations that were far removed from the arid intellectualism of neo-Kantian Marburg.

In "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey," the introductory essay in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, Gadamer describes the mood of cultural tumult as follows:

> Under the influence of a new reception of Kierkegaard in Germany, the claim to truth at that time called itself "existential." Existentialism dealt with a truth which was supposed to be demonstrated not so much in terms of universally held propositions or knowledge as in the immediacy of one's own experience and in the absolute singularity of one's own existence. Dostoevsky, above all others, seemed to us to have known about this. The red Piper editions of his novels glared on every writing desk. The letters of van Gogh and Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, which he wrote against Hegel, beckoned to us, and of course behind all the boldness and riskiness of our existential

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HANS-GEORG GADAMER
edited by Lewis Hahn
(Open Court Publishing, 619 pp., $34.95)

IN PRAISE OF THEORY: SPEECHES AND ESSAYS
by Hans-Georg Gadamer
translated by Chris Dawson
(Yale University Press, 185 pp., $32)

HERMENEUTICS, RELIGION, AND ETHICS
by Hans-Georg Gadamer
translated by Joel Weinsheimer
(Yale University Press, 169 pp., $25)

RICHARD WOLIN's new book, *Heidegger's Children: Philosophy, National Socialism, and German-Jewish Identity*, will be published next year by Princeton University Press.

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> engagement—as a still scarcely visible threat to the romantic traditionalism of our culture—stood the titanic figure of Friedrich Nietzsche with his ecstatic critique of everything, including the illusions of self-consciousness. Where, we wondered, was a thinker whose philosophical power was adequate to the powerful initiatives put forward by Nietzsche?

Some four years later, the students' prayers for a new Nietzsche were answered with the arrival of Martin Heidegger.

ACCORDING TO GADAMER, Heidegger—"this guy from the Black Forest who had grown up on skis"—cut quite a figure in Marburg, holding lectures and seminars in the suspenders and the knee-breeches of his native Schwarzwald (dubbed by his students the "existential outfit") instead of the customary black coat and tie. To his credit, Gadamer's reminiscences of Heidegger's circle in Marburg from time to time include an appropriate measure of irony. For Heidegger was a great seducer of youth: his lectures had a "narcotic" effect on students. And among the faithful, there was a good deal of intellectual mimicry and posturing. (At one point during a seminar, Heidegger singled out a provocative statement by Schelling—"the fear of life itself drives human beings out of the center"—and then declared: "Name for me one single sentence from Hegel that measures up to this sentence in depth!")

"Everywhere," Gadamer recalls, "there were students who had learned a thing or two from the Master—mostly the way he cleared his throat and the way he spat." Heidegger's followers frequently imitated their mentor's trademark variety of "radical questioning" and his penchant for philosophical "destruction"; but as Gadamer freely avows, their pompous rhetoric could barely conceal their own "substantive emptiness." While listening to Heidegger's lectures during the 1930s, Gadamer himself occasionally wondered whether the philosopher's combative new pagan idiom consisted of "expressions of thought or announcements of a neo-heathen mythology." Heidegger, for his part, was once compelled to break off a convoluted train of thought in mid-sentence, declaring in frustration: "This is all Chinese!" In Gadamer's own case, friends fondly coined a new unit of scientific measurement, the "Gad," to designate the number of unnecessary complications marring a philosophical explanation.

Given the mood of apocalypse and catastrophe that prevailed amid the political upheaval and civil unrest following World War I, it was as though Heidegger's ponderous philosophical discourse had a tailor-made audience in postwar German youth. While Germany's mandarin podium-philosophers persisted in their traditional highly formalized and scholastic manner, Heidegger's lexicon was littered with terms suggestive of the "experience" that young Germans of the day craved: "anxiety," "care," "authenticity," and (of particular relevance to the generation of the trenches) "Being-toward-Death." No less important was the fact that Heidegger read "classic" texts, such as those of the Greeks, as anticipations of contemporary questions and problems. His courses were suffused with questions about "existence" and "life" that his fellow philosophy professors seemed too timid to raise.

IT WAS THIS spirit that, in the end, motivated Gadamer to become a classicist. As Gadamer observes:

> What a contrast to the bloodless academic philosophizing of the time, which moved within an alienated Kantian or Hegelian language and attempted once again either to bring transcendental idealism to perfection or else to overcome it! Suddenly Plato and Aristotle appeared as co-conspirators and comrades in arms to everyone who had found that playing around with systems in academic philosophy had become obsolete . . . . From the Greeks one could learn that thinking in philosophy does not, in order to be responsible, have to adopt as system-guiding the thought that there must be a final grounding for philosophy in a highest principle; on the contrary, it stands always under the guiding thought that it must be based on primordial world experience, achieved through the conceptual and intuitive power of the language in which we live. The secret of the Platonic dialogues, it seems to me, is that they teach us this.

In 1928, under the tutelage of the Marburg classicist Paul Friedländer, Gadamer successfully defended a habilitation study on "Plato's Dialectical Ethics." He now awaited a "call" to a professorship; but it would be a while in coming, not least because of Germany's rapidly declining political fortunes. Gadamer diligently busied himself with his teaching duties and his antiquarian philological interests. He was, by his own avowal, oblivious to the gathering political storm. When asked by a friend whether he had read a book on current events, he responded demurely: "I basically read books that are at least only two thousand years old."

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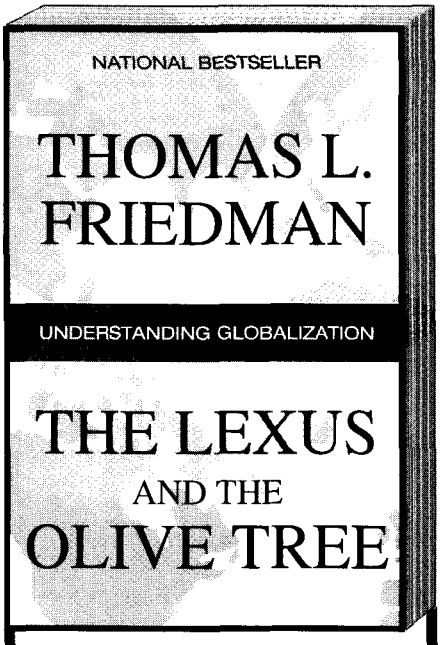

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When 1933 rolled around, Gadamer, like so many other privileged Germans, failed to take the bombast of the Nazis seriously:

> It was a terrible awakening, and we could not absolve ourselves of having failed to perform adequately as citizens. We had underrated Hitler and his kind .... Not one of us had read *Mein Kampf*, although I had paid attention to Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* ... the intellectual basis of National Socialism .... It was a widespread conviction in intellectual circles that Hitler in coming to power would deconstruct the nonsense he had used to drum up the movement, and we counted the anti-Semitism as part of this nonsense. We were to learn differently.

Within weeks of Hitler's accession to power, German university politics changed dramatically. Jewish and left-leaning professors were dismissed. The *Gleichschaltung*, or co-optation, of the German university system was in full gear, with Gadamer's mentor Heidegger leading the way in Freiburg. In keeping with the Nazi conception of "political science," political criteria had become the key to university advancement. One by one, Gadamer's esteemed Jewish friends and colleagues were forced to emigrate. "When [Karl] Löwith went abroad to an uncertain future," Gadamer recalls, "one felt ashamed to remain."

"It remained difficult to keep the right balance," Gadamer later recalled, "not to compromise oneself so far that one would be dismissed and yet still to remain recognizable to colleagues and students."

That this juggling act would prove impossible would become apparent in 1934, when Richard Kroner, a Hegel scholar and long-time friend of Gadamer's, was dismissed from the University of Kiel on racial grounds, and Gadamer stepped in with alacrity to fill his position. His retrospective gloss on the situation seems remarkably oblivious to the dire political context at hand: "For me this was a rich teaching period," he blithely records.

But the Kiel position was merely temporary, and so Gadamer was compelled to find other mechanisms for self-advancement. Or, as he characterizes his professional dilemma at the time: "So in the 1930s my little ship had run aground. How I was to get it afloat again was a difficult question." A solution would shortly be forthcoming. In 1936, he voluntarily attended a political "rehabilitation" camp run by the National Socialist *Dozentenbund* (University Lecturers Association). All in all, the situation proved none too demeaning, and in the end it produced the desired result, securing Gadamer professorial appointments at Marburg in 1937 and Leipzig in 1938. During an excursion to Tannenberg that interrupted the daily routine ("morning gymnastics, competitive games, marches with nationalistic singing, and all that kind of paramilitary nonsense"), the young philologist was able to glimpse the figure of the Führer himself: "He impressed me as being simple, indeed awkward, like a boy playing at being a soldier."

Gadamer's successful march through the German university system was a tribute to his own Schweikian resilience. Political regimes would come and go, but

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Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1939

Gadamer would abide, his reputation relatively unscathed. As the doctrine of "total war" took hold following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Nazi higher-ups seemed somewhat less concerned with questions of ideological fidelity in the rarefied sphere of university life. As Gadamer explained in an interview in 1990: "the real Nazis had no interest in us [philosophy professors] whatsoever."

Having never joined the party, after the war he was one of the few professors whose conduct was deemed entirely beyond reproach. Leipzig was occupied by American troops, and Gadamer became dean of the philosophy faculty. In the fall of 1945, the Soviets moved in. When his predecessor was deemed politically unacceptable, Gadamer became university rector. In the ensuing years he witnessed a series of political purges of university personnel—this time in the name of the political left—that he found as repugnant as those that had occurred under the Nazis. One colleague protested that "we didn't take off the brown straitjacket in order to put on a red straitjacket," and his protest predictably fell on deaf ears.

Gadamer spent a good part of his time as rector arranging for talented colleagues to find positions at universities in the West. And clearly his own days in Leipzig were numbered. He thus seized the first available opportunity to go over to the Allied zone, accepting a post in Frankfurt in 1947. Two years later, he settled permanently in Heidelberg, which became the seat of his post-war renown.

II.

In 1960 GADAMER published *Truth and Method*, the treatise that would establish his reputation as the doyen of "philosophical hermeneutics." This was a philosophical approach to the interpretation of texts that emphasized the irreducible situatedness of the interpreter's standpoint.

The modern discipline of hermeneutics was inaugurated in the early 1800s by the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who realized that authoritative texts, notably the Bible, no longer spoke to their readers in an unmediated and unproblematic way. Instead, owing to the passage of time as well as to a series of "dogmatic" interpretive distortions (largely at the hands of clerical authority), our comprehension of such texts was enshrouded in a palimpsest of misunderstanding. And so Schleiermacher defined hermeneutics as the art of avoiding misunderstanding in order to gain access to the unadulterated original meaning of texts. Schleiermacher thereby displayed an intrinsically positive orientation toward "the past"—in contrast to the presumptions and distortions of "modernity"—that was characteristic of German Romanticism.

For Gadamer, however, Schleiermacher's one-sided emphasis on "avoiding misunderstanding" precipitated him into an "objectivistic delusion" that would become one of the defining features of all subsequent hermeneutics: the delusion that one could conceivably gain access to the definitive truth of a text or an historical epoch in immediate, pristine fashion. According to Gadamer, this new hermeneutic premium on "method" itself represented a deformation, one that was perpetuated by Schleiermacher's successors among the German historical school.

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The hermeneutic desire to recapture the past in a spirit of objectivity was echoed in Leopold von Ranke's famous methodological prescription: to recover the past "the way it really was"—that is, without a trace of subjective input by the historian.

In 1883, in his *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Wilhelm Dilthey famously stressed the methodological incommensurabilities between the natural sciences and the human sciences. Whereas the former sought air-tight, law-like explanations, the latter sought empathetically "to understand," by means of a method of sympathetic interpretation that Dilthey called *Verstehen*, the manifestations of human life. Yet Dilthey was not free of the Rankean presumption: while correctly criticizing the objectivistic approach of the natural sciences in its application to human expressions, he believed that *Verstehen*, too, required the denial of one's own historical standpoint for the sake of remaining faithful to the being-in-itself of the object of historical study.

It was Gadamer's encounter with Heidegger in Marburg in the 1920s that suggested the possibility of surmounting the methodological failings of the historicist tradition. Heidegger's characterization of *Dasein* as "Being-in-the-world," and his teaching that *Dasein* is governed by a series of unsurpassable existential modalities ("thrownness," "care," "discourse," "Angst," "everydayness," and so forth), represented a fundamental challenge to the scientific pretensions of modern thought. Whereas the Cartesian tradition held that all aspects of human finitude should be swept away in favor of the ideal of "absolute certainty," Heidegger stood this on its head by claiming that it was precisely such traces of finitude that served as the indispensable means by which the world and everything in it were revealed to us.

What the philosophy of "method" interpreted as a fundamental hindrance, then, Heidegger took to be a fundamental help. As Gadamer observed in *Truth and Method*: "What appeared first to be simply a barrier that cut across the traditional concept of science and method, or a subjective condition of access to historical knowledge, now becomes the center of fundamental inquiry." Whereas the historicists had sought to efface all aspects of their own historical situatedness, Gadamer, following Heidegger, argued instead that historicity was an indispensable feature of our Being-in-the-world. Instead of trying to escape it, we should acknowledge it, in order to set the stage for a fruitful dialogue with the historical past:

> History does not belong to us, but we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and the state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.

Whereas earlier philosophers had viewed "objectivity" as a methodological desideratum, Gadamer insisted that the quest for absolute criteria did more harm than good. He argued that the essence of historical understanding lay in a never-ending process of dialogic interchange between interpreter and text, a "fusion of horizons," as it were, between past and present.

One of the more controversial features of *Truth and Method* concerned Gadamer's rehabilitation of the notion of "prejudice." Whereas the Enlightenment idea of truth as objectivity belittled prejudice as little more than "false consciousness," Gadamer reconceived it as an essential component of our intellectual being-in-the-world.

> It is not so much our judgments as our prejudices that constitute our being. This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and English Enlightenment. . . . Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience.

This impassioned defense of the productive power of prejudice sounds strange to contemporary ears, but it forms a crucial link between Gadamer's thought before and after World War II.

Another disputed element of *Truth and Method*—and one very much related to the justification of prejudice—was Gadamer's ardent vindication of the authority of tradition, which he preferred to the analytical (hence tradition-destroying) capacities of the Enlightenment. Gadamer lamented the Enlightenment's antipathy toward authority. In his view, this disposition was historically responsible for unleashing an omnivorous political radicalism.

> The recognition of authority is always connected with the idea that what authority states is not irrational and arbitrary, but can be seen, in principle, to be true. This is the essence of the authority claimed by the teacher, the superior, the expert. The prejudices they implant are legitimated by the person himself. Their validity demands that one should be biased in favor of the person who presents them . . . . Thus the essence of authority belongs in the context of a theory of prejudices free from the extremism of the Enlightenment.

"We owe to romanticism," he added, "this correction of the Enlightenment, that tradition has a justification that is outside the arguments of reason and in a large measure determines our institutions and our attitudes."

The Heideggerian origins of Gadamer's vaunted defense of "authority" and "tradition" became apparent in his discussions of the "happening of tradition," which suggested that what was transmitted by tradition was something we were more or less passively fated to accept. In essence, tradition is something that "befalls us," and our job is to acquiesce by recognizing its superior power. As Gadamer put it: "Not what we are doing, not what we ought to be doing but what happens with us beyond our wanting and doing, is at stake . . . . Understanding itself should be thought of not so much as an action of subjectivity but as entering into the happening of tradition in which past and present are constantly mediated." Suffice it to say that an urgent concern for social justice or human rights was not a prominent feature of Gadamer's storied and voluminous treatise.

Gadamer's hermeneutics, then, was characterized by a proudly uncritical veneration of the powers of tradition. His denigration of the capacities of "insight" and "reflection" are cornerstones of the modern Counter-Enlightenment. Since he believed that human understanding is intrinsically untrustworthy, he concluded that the best course is to limit its use as much as possible. Should a confrontation between authority and reason arise, it is always safer to err on the side of authority.

This is not exactly the beginning of wisdom for citizenship in an open society. But in the final analysis, and though Gadamer himself might be loath to admit it, his great book purveys many standard components of the "German ideology." The main concepts of "philosophical hermeneutics" harbor an eerie affinity with the worldview of German particularism. As Jürgen Habermas pointed out in an important review of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer belittles the legacy of philosophical "reflection" bequeathed by German

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idealism "because he has taken over an undialectical concept of Enlightenment from the limited perspective of the German nineteenth century; and with it he has adopted an attitude which vindicated for us Germans a dangerous pretension to superiority separating us from Western tradition."

The foregoing sketch more or less recapitulates the official version of Gadamer's philosophical autobiography, as recounted by the philosopher himself in *Philosophical Apprenticeships* and "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey." Which is to say, the official version is disturbingly incomplete.

III.

In his autobiographical jottings and in interviews, Gadamer always portrays himself as having been a "liberal." In a German context, this means a "national liberal"—a supporter of the rule of law and parliamentary process, though someone who is not opposed to the realization of national aims by the traditional methods of power politics. (Max Weber, who, following Germany's declaration of war in August 1914, showed up to his famous Sunday seminar in full military dress, was an exemplar of national liberalism.) In truth, however, Gadamer's few published writings during the 1930s and 1940s yield a very different portrait of his political orientation at the time.

Whereas he never displayed much outright sympathy with the Nazis, with their petty-bourgeois "strength-through-joy" histrionics—unlike Heidegger, Gadamer's own refined family background seems to have barred such participation—there can be little doubt that the philosopher accepted more of the German ideology than he was willing to avow in retrospect. In this regard, two texts that he published during the Nazi years are crucial. The first is "Plato and the Poets," which appeared in 1934, a seemingly scholarly study of one of the most controversial episodes of Plato's *Republic*, the banishment of the poets in Book II. The second is "Volk and History in Herder's Thought," a lecture given in Paris in 1941 to French prisoners of war, and the only monograph that Gadamer published during the Nazi years.

"Plato and the Poets" is a startlingly forceful vindication of Plato's decision to send the poets packing. To appreciate its argument, some background concerning the political orientation of the professional study of classics in Germany is necessary. Under the tutelage of Johann Winckelmann, the discipline of modern classics was conceived by German scholars in the eighteenth century. Winckelmann's celebrated definition of Greek art—"noble simplicity and calm grandeur"—sounded the clarion call for the neo-classical revival, liberating art from the convolutions of baroque and rococo. But Winckelmann's characterization failed to survive the onslaught of German romanticism, which took the measurelessness of the inner self as its standard.

In 1872, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche delivered the coup de grâce to the harmonious, Winckelmannian understanding of the Greek temperament, by revealing a frenzied Dionysian dimension of Greek art that had been essentially suppressed in earlier accounts. Nietzsche's discovery of the demonic side of the Greek spirit had enormous influence on fin-de-siècle German philosophy and literature; but his iconoclastic findings, effectively parried by the great classical scholar Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, left the discipline of classical philology more or less unmoved. Most German Hellenists were content to pursue their antiquarian passions and to maintain their traditional, Olympian bearing.

But this mandarin detachment quickly unraveled in the wake of the dislocations of the Great War. Like their brethren in other disciplines (the sociologist Werner Sombart in "Traders and Heroes," the philosopher Max Scheler in "The Genius of War and the German War"), German classicists, intoxicated with the "ideas of 1914," hazarded their own reflections on the war's meaning from a national point of view. (It was at this time that National Liberalism ceased to be "liberal.") In the 1920s, the discipline would undergo a powerful ideological transformation that smoothed the transition to a brown-clad *Volksgemeinschaft* fifteen years later.

All along there had been a good dose of self-mythologization in the classics profession. The widespread if unofficial credo had been that modern Germany was ancient Hellas *redivivus*. In the end, such delusions proved far from innocent, since they were frequently coupled with a very unwholesome geo-political assumption: that Germany, as Greece reborn, represented salvation for a post-revolutionary Europe in the throes of accelerated cultural decline. Moreover, this German claim to uniqueness was polemically directed against those "decadent" Latin nations that had diluted Greek greatness by Romanizing it. In this way, German classicists perpetuated and nurtured the unsavory ideology of German singularity.

Tracing the discipline's national-authoritarian reconfiguration during the 1920s and 1930s, one finds that one of the worst offenders was the renowned Werner Jaeger. Shortly after the Great War's end, Jaeger offered the following reflections on the continuities between "Arminius" (the legendary conqueror of the Roman legions in the Teutoburger forest) and General Ludendorff: "Only centuries later would the German spirit come into its own . . . . The previously assimilated elements of antiquity gradually sank into the unconscious to become the substratum of our material culture. But in the bright light of conscious creation that the German race now undertakes [in the war effort] antiquity is reborn, now in a much higher, more spiritual sense as the leader and stimulus of the new *Volk*-culture [*Führerin und Anregerin der werdenden Volkskultur*]." Jaeger's remarks are a measure of the extent to which considerations of "race" began to supplant more traditional notions of spirit (*Geist*) in German cultural discourse.

In the 1920s Jaeger initiated an influential movement within classics called the "Third Humanism." The first two humanisms were ancient Greece and the Renaissance; and modern Germany embodied the third. With the help of like-minded scholars, Jaeger was enormously successful in promoting an ideological re-configuration of Plato studies: where classicists had concentrated on Plato's cosmology and metaphysics, Jaeger's "New Humanism" (as it was occasionally called) directed their attention to the "political Plato"—above all, to the *Republic*, sometimes tellingly translated into German as *Der Staat*.

The stated goal of the Third Humanism was to highlight the contemporary political relevance of antiquity, and thereby to force the antiquarians in the discipline to the sidelines. In the *Republic*, with its celebration of Spartan virtues such as "breeding" and "rank," and its characterization of the "guardians" as a biologically superior warrior caste, the Third Humanists thought that they had discovered a virtual blueprint for a new authoritarian state to replace the widely despised Weimar Republic. Among the political Platonists, Socrates's portrayal of the follies of democratic rule in Book VII now appeared as an uncanny anticipation of the political chaos into which Germany's fledgling republic had recently descended. Plato's Seventh Letter also took on special mystagogical import for the New Humanists. It was reconceived as a furtive commission for the German spiritual elite, who would succeed politically where Plato (in his ill-conceived efforts with the tyrant Dionysos at Syracuse) had failed.

It would be only a slight exaggeration to say that the political *Gleichschaltung* of the German classics profession occurred prior to the Nazi seizure of power. And after the consolidation of Hitler's dictator-

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ship, the political Platonists proceeded to surpass the rhetorical bellicosity of their earlier efforts. The philosopher Hans Heyse declared that Plato's *Republic* was the "Ur-form of the idea of the Reich." The notion that Pericles and Hitler led "parallel lives" became almost an academic commonplace. Under Jaeger's tutelage, the Association of German Philologists proclaimed that "the goal of German education is German man as a member of the *Volksgemeinschaft*." Jaeger himself, writing in the Nazi organ *Volk im Werden*, exulted over the conquest and subjugation of traditional humanism, whose orientation, he claimed, had been excessively "individualistic." After fifteen years of the New Humanism, Jaeger continued, one has finally come to realize that "man of antiquity, in all the decisive aspects of his historical life, is a political man," whose "humanitas" consists in his "membership in a political community."

ONLY AGAINST THIS sweeping ideological makeover of the German classics guild does the political subtext of Gadamer's essay on "Plato and the Poets" become discernible. Although in a later interview Gadamer would characterize the field of classical philology as a "sphere of retreat" beyond the disruptions of contemporary politics, this description seriously misrepresents the facts. Like most other academic disciplines in the Third Reich, classics, too, bent over backwards to adapt itself to the Nazi ideal of "politicized science." Gadamer's impassioned defense of Plato's expulsion of the poets places him squarely in line with the "Political Platonists" and their glorification of the *Republic* as a political model for a revitalized Germany.

Gadamer was aware that, by the apolitical and humanistic bent of German classics as it was traditionally practiced, Plato's ostracism of the poets was one of the most unpalatable aspects of the philosopher's doctrine. His aim in "Plato and the Poets" was to portray the ancient intolerance in a way that was compatible with the needs of the contemporary "German spirit." Gadamer's text is littered with a highly charged, Heideggerian rhetoric: he speaks of an "hour of decision" and of "cleansing," and he makes positive references to the tasks of "political guardianship." These meanings come through only dimly in English translation; but to his German contemporaries, the thrust of Gadamer's argument would have been unmistakable.

Gadamer's text was a thinly disguised political allegory. Plato's repeated condemnation of the Sophists becomes an unmistakable rejection of Weimar's free-floating class of "chattering" intellectuals. The members of Plato's academy, observes Gadamer, are "no apolitical community of scholars." Instead they are united in their abhorrence of "the current sophistic paideia, with its encyclopedic instruction and arbitrary morals," as well as in their desire to promote "the shaping of the political [*staatlichen*] human being." Taking an additional swipe at Weimar liberalism, Gadamer adds: "In Plato justice of the state is not founded negatively on the weakness of individuals whose prudence leads them into a contract. Instead the human being is political in a positive sense because he is capable of rising above his insistence on himself." And Gadamer concludes:

> Plato's paideia is thus meant as a counterweight to the centrifugal pull of those forces of sophistic enlightenment exerted upon the state. . . . In opposition to this sophistic paideia, Plato advances a willfully and radically purified poetry, which is no longer a reflection of human life but the language of an intentionally beautiful lie. This new poetry is meant to express the ethos which prevails in the purified state in a way that is pedagogically efficacious.

Now, "Plato and the Poets" is hardly a Nazi text. Moreover, Gadamer's 1942 essay "Plato's Educational State," seems to direct a number of gibes in the direction of the Nazi regime. Still, the picture is certainly not edifying, and certainly not liberal. Gadamer's willingness to entertain at length the precepts of "educational dictatorship" in 1934—the year of the Röhm purge and Hitler's consolidation of the offices of chancellor and president following von Hindenburg's death—gives pause.

Reflecting on this essay in 1977, Gadamer insisted that it in fact testified to his staunch opposition to Nazism. To support his claim, he invokes a passage from Goethe that he used as an epigraph to his essay: "He who philosophizes is out of step with the ideas of his time." But here Gadamer actually misquotes himself, and in a manner that is very revealing. Goethe's motto, and Gadamer's epigraph, reads in full: "Difficult though it might be to detect it, a certain polemical thread runs through any philosophical writing. He who philosophizes is not at one with the previous and contemporary world's ways of thinking of things. Thus Plato's discussions are often not only directed to something but also directed *against* it." Given the essay's allegorical indictment of democratic cultural license, it is clear that Goethe's maxim was directed by Gadamer not against the Third Reich, but against its profligate predecessor, the Weimar Republic.

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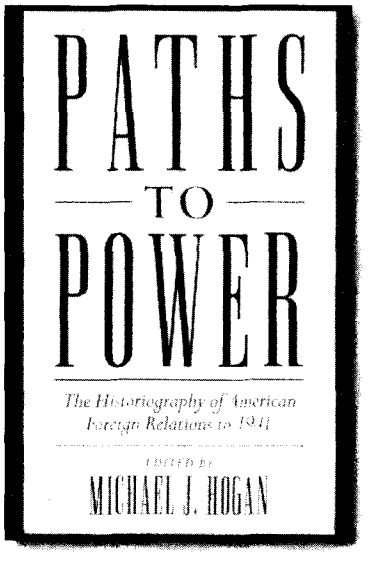

Contributors: *Michael J. Hogan, William Earl Weeks, Kinley Brauer, Edward P. Crapol, Richard H. Collin, David Steigerwald, Brian McKercher, Justus D. Doenecke, Michael A. Barnhart*

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One of the greatest offenders in the Nazification of Plato was Kurt Hildebrandt, a stalwart of the Stefan George circle. In 1920, he published an influential book on racial hygiene, entitled *Norm and Degeneration of Man*. In the early 1930s, Hildebrandt turned his attention to the Greeks with a book called *Plato: The Struggle of the Spirit for Power*. The book is simply disgusting: it is academic propaganda, in which the *Republic* is treated as a model of political dictatorship, and approving allusions to the Nazis abound. And in 1935, Gadamer wrote a fulsome review of this book in the *Deutsche Literarische Zeitung*, in which he suggested that it serve as a model for Plato scholarship.

In a later interview, in 1990, Gadamer offered an emphatic justification of the "political Plato" line. It was owed, he said, to a "need for a model of the state in which there was a positive attitude toward the state." "For this," he adds, "is something we didn't have in the Weimar Republic." And when, in the same interview, Gadamer is queried about the widespread reliance on racial concepts in German scholarship during the 1930s, he remains unrepentant: "Races have existed since the beginning of the world . . . . Interests in racial theory [are] absolutely legitimate." When his interlocutor cautiously tries to steer him to safer shores—"needless to say, one can treat cultural groups from the standpoint of the sociology of religion or cultural anthropology . . ."—Gadamer will have none of it. "All of these have racial foundations!," he insists. "Indians are not Japanese!"

It is important to keep in mind that the ideological liaison between German classicists and Nazism was a mutual affair. Hitler made no secret of his admiration for the Greeks, whose "monumentalism" he consciously sought to emulate in his architectural plans for the Thousand-Year Reich. "The struggle that arises today," he declared in *Mein Kampf*, "concerns far-reaching goals: a millennial culture is fighting for its life, one that encompasses both Greece and Germanness together." And while Sparta, which he once enthusiastically referred to as "the most unsullied racial state in history," occupied a special niche in his historical thinking, he frequently singled out Athens for special praise. An unpublished sketch entitled "Monumental World History" contained the subheading, "The German Revolution," followed by "Foreword: Athens-Rome."

In a speech in 1920 called "Why Are We Anti-Semites?," Hitler remarked, with an eye to Germany's future, that the Greeks achieved their most glorious level of cultural triumph in the aftermath of their defeat of the Persians. According to Albert Speer, moreover, Hitler was fond of drawing parallels between Pericles and himself: just as Pericles had built the Parthenon, he had built the Autobahns. The historian Beat Näf, in *From Pericles to Hitler?* aptly summarized the Third Reich's fascination with the ancients as follows: "Monumental buildings, art, beauty, the sublime, racial purity, power politics, Pericles, and hero emulation—these were the ideas that connected Hitler to antiquity." And the philosopher Teresa Orozco, who has written the definitive study of Gadamer's political involvements during the Nazi years, takes Näf's claim a step further: "Without the ideological construction of the Greek-German axis, the 'naked and the dead of the Third Reich' are inconceivable."

Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, 1921

IV.

LIKE CLASSICS, THE field of German literary studies did its best to fall in line with the ideological requirements of the "German Revolution." Here, too, the transformation did not occur overnight. Instead, *völkisch* tendencies that had been prominent in German culture for a hundred and fifty years merely gained the upper hand—with a new racially tinged stridency. Professors stressed the purity and the superiority of indigenous German literary traditions, which they were fond of contrasting with the superficiality of "cosmopolitan" literature, so-called *Weltliteratur*. It would be foolish to underestimate the inordinately positive roles that these scholars played in legitimating the Third Reich in the eyes of more tradition-oriented German elites such as the *Bildungsbürgertum*, or the educated middle class.

In the search for authentic progenitors of the pan-German worldview, a veritable industry arose around the thought of Herder. As was true of the dominant interpretations of Plato, the political readings of Herder's philosophy were highly selective. The early Herder had been a vociferous critic of the Enlightenment and an advocate of cultural particularism: "each nation has its center of happiness within itself, just as every sphere has its center of gravity," he remarked in *Yet Another Philosophy of History* in 1774. "The Egyptian detests the shepherd and the nomad and despises the frivolous Greek . . . . But prejudice is good, in its time and place, for happiness may spring from it. It urges nations to converge upon their center, attaches them more firmly to their roots, causes them to flourish after their kinds." This Herder was celebrated, but the avowed cosmopolitanism of his later *Ideas for a Philosophy of History of Mankind* was generally suppressed or ignored.

And although Herder was a cultural pluralist—in his view, each culture had a specific nature it was charged to develop, and none was intrinsically superior to any other—his German interpreters in the 1930s and 1940s could not resist claiming

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his idea of the *Volk* for the National Socialist cause. For the German literary guild of the 1930s, Herder was celebrated as a "prophet of Greater Germany," a "prophet of German unity at the time of Germany's tribal dispersion." Since Herder was deemed one of the spiritual "leaders" of the German Volk (one observer referred to him as "the greatest spiritual leader [*Führer*] of our nation"), comparisons with Hitler abounded. In 1934, in his study of "the national idea from Herder to Hitler," Hans Dahmen summarized the reigning mood of Herder scholarship by declaring: "From Herder to Hitler—that is the fate-laden path of the German spirit as well as the German state." Scholars frequently contended that what Herder meant by "tribe" or "blood" (*Geblüt*) was a distinct harbinger of the Nazi concept of "race."

GADAMER'S MONOGRAPH, *Volk and History in Herder's Thought*, fits squarely within the line of Herder interpretation that was dominant during the Third Reich. Moreover, the circumstances of its composition and presentation—Gadamer wrote it in the aftermath of Germany's dramatic victory over France in 1940, and delivered it the following year as a lecture before French prisoners of war at the German Institute in Paris—raise additional questions. For such lecture trips were a common propaganda device employed by the Nazis to bolster the regime's intellectual respectability abroad. The institution at which Gadamer lectured had been established in September 1940 expressly on the belief that "the 'moral renewal' of the defeated can only come from the conquerors."

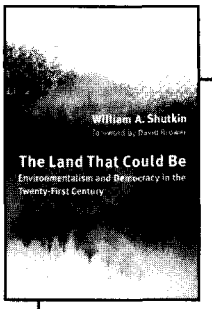
Gadamer's lecture openly basked in the glory of Germany's recent military triumphs. It suggested that Germany's battlefield successes were the expression of a manifestly superior culture; and that the French defeat was indicative of a culture ("rationalistic" and "enlightened") that was clearly past its prime. As Gadamer put it, in his opening remarks: "Only by breaking with the historical image and cultural ideal of the French [i.e., eighteenth] century could Herder attain the secret meaning for 'Volk' and 'State' of the Germans that we attribute to him today.... *Critique of the Enlightenment*: that was the passionate attitude that Herder shared with his great contemporaries."

By forsaking the "abstract shadow images" of the Enlightenment, Gadamer told the French prisoners, Herder made his great discovery: that "heart, warmth, blood, humanity, [and] life" and not "ideas," are the "essence of history." "In a century that was proud of its freedom from prejudice, Herder recognized the power of prejudice to produce happiness, insofar as it 'concentrates peoples around their respective centers.'" In this respect, Herder's ideas were a stimulus to future "political will and thought." Although Herder was "no friend of the state," continued Gadamer, "neither did he have the free happiness of the individual foremost in mind." Instead, the animating idea of his thought was what Gadamer described as the "*genetic spirit and character of a Volk*": "From Herder's new historical experience of reality there arises the idea of a living constitution that derives from the spirit of the nation .... His blindness to the order- and form-giving role of the absolutist state of his day turned him into a visionary of a new basic force in the sphere of the state: *the life of the Volk* .... In this way the word '*Volk*' gained ... a new depth and power in Germany."

Gadamer portrayed Herder as the direct precursor of all that was significant in subsequent German intellectual life: German romanticism, Hegel's notion of the *Volksgeist*, the historical school of law. Although Herder never lived to see a unified Germany, his *völkisch* thought was a harbinger of Europe's political future. But when all is said and done, Gadamer mused in his lecture, Germany's belated development may have been a "precondition for the German concept of *Volk*—in contrast with the democratic shibboleths of the West to prove its power [to form] a new social and political order."

One can only imagine how Gadamer's concluding remarks were received by his literally captive audience: "Herder imparted to the German *Volk* ... that which distinguishes it from all other European peoples: the depth and breadth of its historical self-consciousness." Whereas other nations may boast only a single formative, epoch-making event to their credit (in France's case, the revolution of 1789), Germany "lives from the entire expanse of its world-historical heritage: from the passion of the Greek polis as well as the faith of early Germany, the medieval idea of the German Empire as well as the great moments of political and national unity in modern history." "In every German, whether he knows it or not," concludes Gadamer, "lives a part of Herder's soul."

GADAMER'S *COLLECTED WORKS*—a definitive compilation of the philosopher's published writings that appeared from 1986 to 1995—comprise ten volumes. *Volk and History in Herder's Thought* is not to be found in it. A revised version of the text was republished in 1967 as an afterword to Herder's *Yet Another Philosophy of History*, under the title "Herder and the Historical World." It appears in the fourth volume



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of Gadamer's *Collected Works*—but the offending passages have been struck, and there is no reference to the original text. The concept of *Volk*, which was the intellectual focal point of the original text, has been excised virtually without a trace, as have the ceaseless encomiums to the virtues of German particularism. In the prettified later version, instead of celebrating "the great moments of political and national unity of modern [German] history," Gadamer speaks about the "cruddest despotism" that has "burdened German history of the last two centuries."

In retrospect, Gadamer characterized his Herder monograph as a "purely scholarly study" that "avoided every hint of relevance to the historical present." He claims that he even ran certain political "risks" by publishing it, due to a brief discussion of the so-called "Slav chapter" in Herder's *Ideas*, in which Herder, in keeping with his belief in cultural pluralism, advocates the development of national sentiment among Slavic peoples: a tabooed theme during the Nazi era. "There was trouble right away," Gadamer recalls, in a tone of self-congratulation, "because I objected to the predominance of the Nordic and Germanic races and argued in terms of the diversity of peoples, cultures, languages."

As we have seen, this contention is flatly contradicted by the published version of Gadamer's text, which is suffused with claims to German ideological and political superiority. It is hardly the work of an opponent of the Nazi regime, or of an "inner emigrant." (Thomas Mann uttered the last word on the subject of "inner emigration" in 1945, when he remarked: "In my eyes books which could be published in Germany between 1933 and 1945 are less than worthless and not worth taking in one's hands. A stench of blood and shame attaches to them. They should all be turned into pulp.") Gadamer's claims to having provided "spiritual resistance" against the regime cannot be credited.

In 1970 Claus Grossner, a journalist for *Die Zeit* who had recently completed a long interview with Gadamer on the subject of contemporary politics, expressed shock upon encountering the Herder text with its plethora of politically compromising passages. "The problem is not [Gadamer's] personal integrity, concerning which I have no doubts," observed Grossner. "Instead it is the question of the extent to which a philosophy in the Heideggerian mold—that is, 'philosophical hermeneutics'—stands in a systematic relationship to social conditions that produced a totalitarian system like National Socialism." Forced to comment on his fleeting involvement with the regime, Gadamer reacted defensively, and dishonestly: he conceded that the passages in question were disreputable, and he insisted that he now firmly renounced them, but he added: "But have no illusions about the fact that thirty years from now all of us will renounce what's going on [politically] today."

In other words: under the Nazis things were bad, but things have always been bad, and things always will be bad; so why the fuss? Yet from the nebulous (and extremely ahistorical) vantage point of "the eternal recurrence of catastrophe," which Gadamer seemingly adopts, the singularity of real historical events—such as the Nazi era and its crimes—vanishes into insignificance. The Third Reich becomes merely one in a never-ending series of unfortunate political circumstances, none of which is ultimately worth taking seriously.

V.

THE POINT OF the foregoing exercise in philosophical archaeology has not been to bury Gadamer, though it is certainly impossible to praise him. In part, its purpose has been to demonstrate the circumstantial complexity of the Third Reich: how difficult it was, even for well-intentioned spirits, to go along with their society and their culture without seriously compromising themselves. As Klaus Mann showed unforgettably in his novel *Mephisto*, a train of initial compromises often escalates to the point at which one has lost one's soul.

At the same time, our examination of Gadamer's wartime conduct raises questions about his philosophy and its relationship to its times, then and now. Gadamer's hermeneutics has never sought to conceal its fundamentally "conservative" bearing: its romantic trust in the past. "The history-embracing and history-preserving element runs deep in hermeneutics," he wrote in 1967, "in sharp contrast to sociological interest in reflection as a means of emancipation from authority and tradition." Or, as Jürgen Habermas once put it: "Hermeneutics bangs helplessly from within against the walls of tradition."

The ardently "conservative" nature of the hermeneutic standpoint came across vividly in Gadamer's well-known debate with Habermas over the virtues of "ideology critique," or the so-called emancipatory interest in unmasking "false consciousness"—a position that Gadamer systematically mistrusted. For Gadamer, "ideology critique" is redolent of the Enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudice." In his view, the French *philosophes'* arrogant confidence in the sovereign powers of human reason is destructive of history, tradition, and cultural particularity; and so it is a recipe for social engineering and political disaster. As he suggests at one point in his contribution to *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*: "a world revolution of pure reason" would be akin to the "stabilization of the world's climate ... by means of global air conditioning."

From his stance in the debate over the merits of "ideology critique," one begins to understand that certain ideological elements of Gadamer's study of Herder are central to his mature thought. Herder's criticism of the Enlightenment—his anti-Enlightenment willingness to "recognize the power of prejudice to produce happiness," as Gadamer puts it—is a standpoint that Gadamer has made his own. In fact, a well- known article on Gadamer's thought bears the title "The Philosophy of Prejudice." And in a famous chapter of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer undertakes a "rehabilitation of prejudice" that is clearly inspired by Herder and the lineage of the Counter-Enlightenment. "There is one prejudice of the enlightenment that is essential to it: the fundamental prejudice of the enlightenment is the *prejudice against prejudice* itself, which deprives tradition of its power." And further: "The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust."

ONE CANNOT HELP but wonder: isn't the hermeneutical defense of "prejudice" and "authority" all too reminiscent of the "German ideology," of the familiar Counter-Enlightenment rejection of "reason," "modernity," and "autonomy" in favor of often oppressive local circumstances and traditions? In the face of this inflexible defense of prejudice and tradition, where indeed might one discover the critical resources necessary to combat dogmatic beliefs and extreme social injustice? By making inflated claims for the "universality of the hermeneutic standpoint," Gadamer has seriously confused the "validity" of norms with their "being" or "facticity": just because a norm or a meaning has been transmitted to us from the past does not make it worthy of acceptance. And it is surely a strange and unfriendly defense of tradition that equates it with prejudice.

It is for this reason that Richard Rorty's fulsome birthday tribute to Gadamer, which appeared recently in the *London Review of Books*, looks a little preposterous. Rorty, who is always on the prowl for distinguished ancestors for his own philosophical viewpoint, sorely misreads Gadamer as a pioneer of his own brand of postmodern liberal relativism. He singles out for praise Gadamer's celebrated dictum that "Being that can be understood is language" as support for his own contention

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that the mediations of language prevent philosophy from ever grasping the real nature of things or, more simply, "the truth." But in his haste to lay low the last vestiges of foundational thinking and "philosophical realism," Rorty unwisely forges alliances with thinkers whose positions undermine the liberal virtue that he prizes above all others: the virtue of tolerance.

This is the same Rorty who once wrote that liberalism is essentially defined by its opposition to cruelty; but Gadamer's philosophy turns out to have been complicit with an unprecedented cruelty. Gadamer's historicism is, to be sure, a species of relativism, yet one that is very difficult to square with the values of a free society. Instead, as we have seen, it is a relativism that is predicated on "prejudice" and drenched in the proverbial (and highly questionable) "peculiarities of German history." That Rorty allows himself to be duped by the pieties of hermeneutics suggests two things: the perils of decontextualized, purely immanent, and somewhat self-interested readings of philosophical texts, from which the actual historical careers of ideas have been eliminated; and the conceptual weaknesses of Rorty's own position. His fear of metaphysics has become a fear of reason and a fear of truth.

EXAMINING THE CASE of Gadamer with the German catastrophe of 1933-45 in mind, one is compelled to observe that the philosopher exhibited a distinct failure to learn. His political writings in the postwar period partake of the "metapolitical" genre: eloquent, if familiar, indictments of science, technology, and reason; of the forces of "modernity" that threaten the closedness of traditional life-worlds and the purity of the "hermeneutic situation." As Gadamer observed in 1966: "Unavoidably, the mechanical, industrial world is expanding within the life of the individual as a sort of sphere of technical perfection. When we hear modern lovers talking to each other, we often wonder if they are communicating with words or with advertising labels and technical terms ... of the modern industrial world."

It goes without saying that elements of such a critical standpoint are necessary and important. What matters is the intellectual context in which those elements appear; and Gadamer's suspicions of modernity comported quite comfortably with an intellectual context that was tolerant of barbarism and inhumanity, or even justified it. The criticism of modernity, after all, has a very checkered past, and Gadamer's criticisms (many of which are reprised in *Praise of Theory*) are all too reminiscent of those German mandarin indictments of bourgeois *Zivilisation* that were standard issue in the 1920s, unilluminating footnotes to the pessimism and the irrationalism of Oswald Spengler and Ludwig Klages.

When Gadamer finally descends from the terrain of metapolitics to engage the contemporary world, the results are hardly reassuring. In "The Universality of the Hermeneutic Problem," an essay written in 1966 and included in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* he offers a nostalgic look at the cozy relationship between "art" and "*Volk*" during the Nazi era: "Despite its misuse by the National Socialists, we cannot deny that the idea of art being bound to *Volk* involves *real insight*. A genuine artistic creation stands within a particular community, and such a community is always distinguishable from the cultured society that is informed and *terrorized* by art criticism." Terrorized, by art criticism!

In an interview in 1986, he laments (echoing Heidegger) the fact that Germany is "caught in a pincers between Russia and America"—a "choice between two evils," he calls it—and he bemoans Bonn's status as a cultural giant and a political dwarf: "We are reduced to the status of a *Kulturnation*. Our goods are cultural goods, as was the case with Greece under Roman rule.... To come back to the theme of Europe caught in the 'pincers between Russia and America,' yes, there is a danger [in] the appeal of the American way of life.... And in that sense the United States is a danger to peace, because there is a sense of mission which equals that of Soviet Russia...." The man who lectured French prisoners of war in 1941 on the historical justification of German chauvinism should have disqualified himself from postwar laments about the decline of German power.

Gadamer's rejection of "human rights"—they are, presumably, too redolent of the Enlightenment's search for first principles—culminates in an endorsement of the "Soviet way." He justifies this preference in terms of a relativistic "right to difference": "One needs to be tolerant in the West toward the Soviet Union. Always insisting on human rights, insisting that they must accept parliamentary democracy in order to industrialize fully, that reveals only our own preoccupations, which do not reflect *their* history." This is the crudest historicism. In the end, one sees all too clearly that the beautiful soul of the "hermeneutical consciousness" has remained essentially immune to the lessons and the virtues of a democratic political culture. It loves tradition more than it loves justice, which is the wrong way, the ugly way, the catastrophic way, to love tradition. ■

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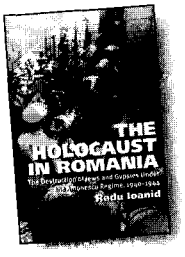

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The Pretender

By DENIS DONOGHUE

George Moore, 1852–1933 by Adrian Frazier

(Yale University Press, 579 pp., $35)

"THIS IS NOT a literary or critical biography," Adrian Frazier says. "It does not devote the largest portion of its space to interpretations of Moore's books, assessments of his importance, descriptions of his literary style, or full accounts of many other subjects, such as the impact of his exploitation of two new forms of publication, the cheap one-volume novel in the mid-1880s, and the deluxe, signed, limited edition in the 1920s." It may seem odd that a biography of a writer does not concentrate on his writings, but Frazier's decision is justified. Moore spent most of his life turning himself into a personage. The books that he wrote were ancillary to that aim. "A man of the Age of Wilde," Frazier says, "Moore was an artist in self-invention." He cultivated "a purely elective form of identity." Or, as I hold, he was a rascal in self-invention, a part-time liar.

Moore's origin was privileged, but not cultivated. His father, George Henry Moore, owned one of the largest estates in Ireland, 12,481 acres in County Mayo and a fine house, Moore Hall, on the far shore of Lough Carra. He was unusual in being a landowner, a Roman Catholic, a member of Parliament, and something of a Nationalist: he played a part in releasing Catholic tenants from the burden of paying tithes to the (Protestant) Church of Ireland. A decent landlord, he insisted that his tenants should pay their rents, but only reasonable rents: he did not grind the poor into deeper poverty. He also owned racehorses, and gambled pretty successfully on their performances. A few winnings enabled him to send his son George at the age of nine to be educated at St. Mary's College, Oscott, a boarding school near Binningham, where the boy soon distinguished himself by a startling degree of backwardness. Apparently he never learned anything. Even in later years he could rarely bring himself to read a book through. His method was to find someone who was known to have read the book and talk to him about it. Yeats, who made the mistake of being a friend of Moore's till he discovered the magnitude of the error, said that Moore never read a play of Shakespeare's.

Moore became prolific by writing more than he read. Besides, he didn't need to earn a living. When his father died in 1870, he inherited the property and rents of 3,569 pounds a year, enough to let him live an idle social life in Paris. He became an absentee landlord, found a theme by hating Catholicism, and veered between thinking that Ireland, its people, and the Irish language—which he never tried to learn—constituted an abomination or, alternatively, an idyllic region that he sometimes deigned to moon over.

Meanwhile there was the boulevardier's Paris—a remarkably permeable scene, apparently, in 1873. Within no time, Moore was speaking voluble if bad French to various artists at the Café Nouvelle Athenes, and later in salons of some grandeur. In cafés, studios, and drawing rooms, he met Mallarmé, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Catulle Mendes, Manet, Degas, Zola, Turgenev and—if he is to be believed—everyone else worth meeting. He was in Paris to learn to paint, but he soon gave up on that. Blind to most of his defects, he saw that he had no talent with a brush.

He might have stayed in Paris all his life, making a career of gregariousness and talk, except that in 1879 his tenants turned against him and threatened to stop paying rent. Moore rushed back to Mayo, appointed a new land agent, and started eviction proceedings. But prudence enforced itself and in the end he settled for a mixture of compromise and forgiveness. The tenants probably had their rents reduced by the courts. Moore believed that Ireland would inevitably get some form of Home Rule, and he urged landlords to come to terms with their tenants. Meanwhile tenants must pay up.

By 1882, Moore was collecting the fairly

DENIS DONOGHUE is University Professor and Henry James Chair of English and American Letters at New York University. His new book, *Words Alone: The Poet T. S. Eliot*, will be published this year by Yale.

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reliable sum of 1,780 pounds a year, much less than his father had enjoyed but a lot better than nothing and a broken skull. He had to support his mother and provide for the minimal upkeep of Moore Hall, so the income was not entirely his to spend. He had already moved to London, and determined to add to his funds by becoming a writer and selling his wares.

NOT THAT HE thought he had much to sell, though he affected to think himself a far better novelist than Hardy, Conrad, or James. When he published *A Modern Lover*, he wrote to his mother about it:

> I was born, I live, and I shall die a peculiar man—I could not be commonplace were I to try. The bitterest thing is what I think myself. It is not a work of genius, not of great talent. It is the work of a man affected by that most terrible of all maladies, a dash of genius.

He didn't have a dash. He had nothing of genius but the desire of it. He had no imagination, and therefore could not resist what Adorno called "the pressure exerted on what is human by what merely exists." His novels are written without benefit of a style. Moore's nature, as Yeats said, "bitter, violent, discordant, did not fit him to write the sentences men murmur again and again for years." If something happened, Moore could transcribe it or trace curlicues around it, but he could not imagine anything beyond the given.

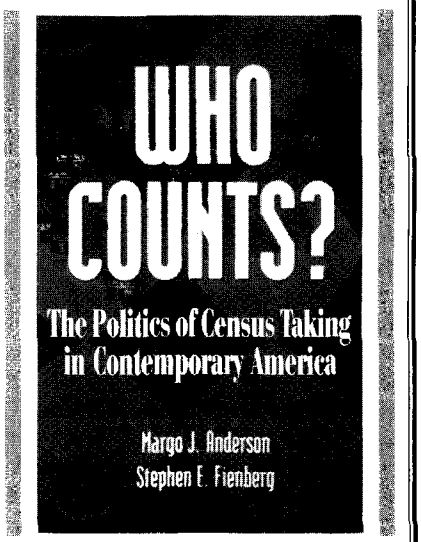
If a greater writer wrote a book that Moore heard about, he could learn enough of it to copy its most obvious procedures. His books are parasitic on the works of Zola, Flaubert, Ibsen, Huysmans, Dujardin, Pater, and Turgenev. The experience of inwardness that Dujardin expressed in his *Les Lauriers sont coupes* turned up, roughly imitated, in Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man*. When someone drew Moore's attention to Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Notebook*, Moore decided that he could do something along the same lines, stories of Irish rural life, priest-ridden of course, *The Untilled Field*. In 1894 he mixed Dickens and Zola to produce *Esther Waters*, complete with a servant girl, an unwanted pregnancy, two men bidding for her, one a horse-racing gambler whom she marries, till he dies of consumption and she returns to Woodview, the first house of her service. In *A Mere Accident*—a story of rape and its consequences—Moore offered to show that whatever Huysmans had done Moore could do better. Bernard Shaw reviewed it and said that "Moore's commendable reticence in avoiding the realities of the rape might have been taken further, even to the point of not writing the book." *Modern Painting* is mostly Parisian gossip and plagiarism; it can't be taken seriously as art criticism.

MOORE'S MAIN LIMITATION was that he could not see any relation between himself and the work in hand but one of showing off. He kept inserting himself into contexts supposedly impersonal. He did not understand—to quote Adorno again—that "the way the mind gains possession of itself is through the process of the work's gaining possession of the mind." In his fiction, Moore had no access to this process. It is sometimes maintained that Joyce's *Dubliners* is indebted to Moore's *The Untilled Field*, and that Joyce learned from Moore's novel *The Lake* how to charge an episode with symbolic force. Some readers have compared the scene in Moore's *Vain Fortune* where Hubert Price watches his wife sleeping with the last scene in Joyce's "The Dead," in which Gabriel Conroy watches Gretta sleep. The comparison merely shows what a far greater writer Joyce was than Moore. The passage in *Vain Fortune* lurches in and out of Hubert's mind. Gabriel's sensibility takes charge of the occasion and performs it without any breach of tone. Joyce had nothing to learn from Moore.

It is surprising that Moore got any work done, he spent so much time and energy running after women. He started with a disability: he was no oil painting. Yeats described him as "a man carved out of a turnip, looking out of astonished eyes." To be fair, the peculiarity of the eyes was caused by a hunting accident. But his body, as Yeats described it, was "insinuating, upflowing, circulative, curvicular, pop-eyed." If Moore was successful with women, it must have been because he gave them endless attention. Yet he boasted of his conquests so relentlessly that some of his cronies decided he must be impotent, and Yeats spread the word accordingly. Sarah Purser quipped: "Some men kiss and tell; Moore tells but doesn't kiss."

In later life, as Yeats said, "Moore wrote a long preface to prove that he had a mistress in Mayfair." He never let a sexual opportunity pass. In the event, many of the women whom he courted accepted his hospitality, and wrote him letters of appreciation, but stayed well away from the bed. His interest in them was prurient, to begin with. He urged them to treat him as a "father confessor" and to tell him the details of their sexual experiences, evidently hoping that these disclosures would lead to the ultimate intimacy. Perhaps they did, sometimes.

The love of Moore's life—this we can believe—was Lady Cunard. He met her



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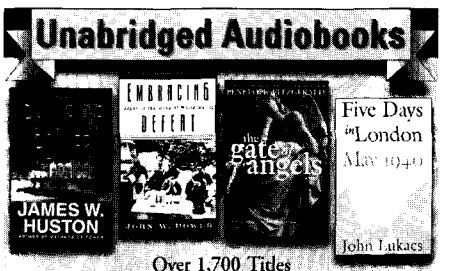

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when she was still Maud Burke. At their second meeting, in London at the Savoy restaurant (of course), she invited him to her table: "George Moore, you have a soul of fire." On April 25, 1895, she married Sir Bache Cunard (of Cunard Steamship Lines). The following March she had a daughter, Nancy Cunard. Moore thought or fancied that he was Nancy's father, but he could not be sure.

Lady Cunard had many lovers before, during, and after her marriage. Moore was often jealous, but he continued to love her in his fashion and to follow her from one country house to another, planning assignations that were often thwarted. On one occasion she asked him not to come to her bedroom because—"you will understand"—she had arranged to entertain a certain young man for the night. Moore put up with these disappointments pretty well. Even when Lady Cunard started one of her more serious affairs, in the summer of 1910, with the conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Thomas Beecham, Moore permitted himself only one barb; he told her he understood she would have to keep herself "at concert pitch."

Meanwhile, and indeed for the rest of his life, he stayed in communication with Nancy. She was fond of him beyond his merits. One evening in Paris, when he was an old man, he asked her to take off her clothes. She had given sexual favors to so many men that the thought of standing naked before the quasi-paternal Moore did not trouble her. "My clothes left me," she reported, "lying in a graceful summer pool on the floor, as if they had slipped away of themselves." Whereupon Moore said, "Oh, what a beautiful back! As long as a weasel's. What a beautiful back you have, Nancy."

ADRIAN FRAZIER AGREES with the common opinion that Moore's best work is not in his fiction but in his autobiographies, *Confessions of a Young Man*, *Memoirs of My Dead Life*, and especially *Hail and Farewell*. Moore's crucial discoveries were that he had a rare talent for malice and that his best utterances were snubs. "Return to your dahlias," he told D. H. Lawrence, "I remember them much better than your ideas." The years he spent in Dublin gave him the most piquant opportunities and account for the funniest chapters in Frazier's book, as in Moore's *Vale*. Dublin was just the right size. Everybody in the literary and artistic scene knew everybody else and kept in circulation the latest jibes, insults, and mockeries. It was an open city for anyone like Moore who had "the terrible gift of familiarity."

Like his master Rousseau, Moore was shameless, he confessed to sins he never committed and regarded his friends as there to be interchangeably amused and ridiculed. Yeats never forgave him for calling him middle-class and describing his fur coat. Lady Gregory threatened to sue Moore for saying she had tried to get the local Catholics to turn Protestant. When friends or masters died, Moore attacked them in print to get rid of his past. He was a resolute mischief-maker.

FRAZIER HAS TOLD the story well. He doesn't make any large claim for Moore, apart from the aberration of thinking *The Lake* "a stylistic tour de force." Presumably he has been impressed by the final scene in which Father Oliver Gogarty, suffering from woman-trouble and a loss of his vocation, decides to leave Garravand and make a living as a journalist in New York. He places a suit of clothes, shirt, and socks on the Joycetown side of the lake, takes off his priestly garb, and swims naked across the lake. The novel is not redeemed by the obvious symbolism.

Frazier knows that Moore was a dreadful person and, in most of his books, a coarse writer:

> What's more, there was something wrong with the man, wrong with his heart, wrong therefore with the style in which he regarded life. That style was elitist, sneering, purely scampish; it had not sufficiently transcended the ugly masculinity of the caddish club in which it had been born—the offices of *Bat* and *Hawk*, an air of acrid cheroots and brandies and soda, only partly alleviated by the fading fragrance of the atmosphere of the Café Nouvelle Athenes.

Frazier thinks that Moore was a homosexual "who loved to make love to women."

Why write a long biography of this wretched man? Three reasons. The processes of self-invention in the last years of the nineteenth century are worth thinking about, if only because of Wilde and Yeats. In the history of the Irish Literary Revival, Moore often appears as a figure of farce, a welcome presence among writers who took themselves very seriously indeed. The seriousness is justified in Yeats, Synge, George Russell, Douglas Hyde, and Lady Gregory—Joyce hardly comes into the reckoning; he was not party to the Yeatsian project—but it is hard to take Moore's friendly enemy Edward Martyn at his own valuation.

And the final reason is that the material for a big biography is as copiously available as it will be for many years, till the great edition of Yeats's letters is complete. Joseph Hone's *The Life of George Moore* (1936) leaves out of account Lady Cunard and Nancy and is in other respects inaccurate. Jean Noel's *George Moore: L'Homme et l'oeuvre* (1966) is informative mainly on the years in Paris, but on London and Dublin trusts Hone too readily. Frazier's book has a few errors of fact—the Battle of the Boyne was 1690, not 1688; Baudelaire's "The Painter of Modern Life" is about Constantin Guys, not Manet—but it is a lively book, vividly written, and the best we are likely to want or to need for many years. ■

What Is Good and What Is Bad

The iris of the sun, spotted from a train going south. Highflown grasses, quivering deer. "One of the frozen lambs seems to have gone awol." The chef is thrown off the train. His services were held in doubt after he hummed two bars of a hymn when consulted about the consistency of some noodles. No one to stuff the pig, once the bread is cooked. A steward says the king is in the rear car. The king was once an engineer. The king was once the chef, now rolling in the lavender overgrowth tufting from the ditches. "We have entered a time of national disorder." The passengers frequently leave their most important items at home, and yet every compartment is occupied. Either they knit or they write letters or they talk about the way *they* think it all happened. From this place in the corridor they sound like barking dogs. Later in the afternoon there will be a fire. The bags will pop from the windows of the train. The travellers will not cry, even through memories of lying in bed all day back home.

Max Winter

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Capitol Style

CAPITOL HILL IS HAVING A bad spring. First came an article in the March *Atlantic Monthly* titled "Notes on the Murder of Thirty of My Neighbors." "Killing sprees in suburban schools are rare and shocking events," reads the introduction. "Imagine, then, living in a neighborhood where a sign in a laundromat asks patrons to be sure, before putting their clothes in the wash, to empty all pockets of bullets." Imagine, indeed. I live less than three blocks from the article's author, Jim Myers. These murders, over an eight-year span, all occurred within less than a half-mile radius of my house. According to Myers's calculations, based on police department statistics, our section of Capitol Hill averages a whopping 3.8 homicides a year—one every three months or so. "The Victorian row houses on my street are charming; our trees are gloriously verdant," Myers writes. "Military bands play on the Capitol steps on summer nights. But the *pop-pop-pop* of automatic-weapons fire is the tattoo we more often hear."

READING MYERS'S DESCRIPTION OF Capitol Hill, I was struck by how well it encapsulates the neighborhood's schizophrenia. I haven't lived in Capitol Hill for as long as Myers has, but I used to live in New York City, so I know a war zone when I see one. But I don't see one. Although Capitol Hill's reputation for crime and mayhem is well-deserved, the neighborhood is, at the same time, one of the quietest, most civilized places I've ever lived. For the price of a one-bedroom apartment in Adams Morgan, you can rent an entire Capitol Hill row house, in good condition, complete with backyard. At the old-style Eastern Market, located just blocks away, vendors sell everything from fresh pasta to Thai fish sauce. In the summer, entire streets are closed off for huge block parties. And on Halloween, unprepared for the deluge of costumed children, my husband and I ran out of candy in half an hour. I did recently wake up at four o'clock in the morning to an awful howling outside my window, but it wasn't a police siren—it was two cats fighting. Last weekend, our block held a communal yard sale.

I ENJOY, IN SHORT, A QUALITY OF life for which the well-heeled denizens of Washington's swankiest suburbs routinely shell out small fortunes. And, in a certain sick way, I have my neighborhood's high murder rate to thank. After all, if it weren't for the risk of getting gunned down while waiting for a cheeseburger at the New Dragon carryout—which Myers appropriately describes as "one of the deadliest spots in our neighborhood"—Capitol Hill's rental rates would skyrocket, and people like me would be priced out of the market.

AND THE HIGH CRIME RATE IMPROVES the quality of life in another way, too: it seems to contribute to the unbelievable friendliness of Capitol Hill's residents. As Myers explains, "There were so many killings in the mid-nineties that they were almost like community socials. Neighbors came out, greeted one another, shook hands, and shook their heads. I remember hearing one neighbor say to another, 'Hey, I didn't see you at last night's shooting.'" When was the last time you heard of a city dweller even recognizing a neighbor, let alone speaking to him or her? But, then again, most other city dwellers don't have such dramatic opportunities to socialize.

RICK BUETTNER

THIS NEIGHBORLINESS CAME IN HANDY when we discovered that criminals aren't the only ones preying on the community. It began one evening several weeks after the *Atlantic* article appeared, when my husband came home from work to discover an unaccountably large colony of winged insects congregating on our kitchen floor. Having seen nary a bug in the house since we moved in, we found it mystifying that such an alarming number of insects could suddenly surface. "Perhaps they came in with the mail," my husband suggested. The mystery was solved the next morning, when I phoned an exterminator to discuss the situation. After describing the previous evening's proceedings, I naïvely asked, "Could this just be a fluke?" The man on the other end of the line sighed. "A mature colony of termites is attacking your house," he told me. Well, I thought, at least the Marine barracks are right down the street. "Are you sure?" I responded. The man sighed again. "Ma'am," he said, "you're my third call this morning from Capitol Hill." It was 9:15.

THE TECHNICIAN WHO CAME TO appraise our termite situation was most reassuring. Apparently Washington is as plagued with termites as it is with homicides—the White House itself has a problem with the timber-hungry insects that was only recently brought under control by a new high-tech termite-killing system. And Capitol Hill, as usual, is one of the worst-affected areas. While our nation's lawmakers debate the finer points of legislation and, less than a mile away, killers gun down people waiting in line for cheeseburgers, the ground beneath their feet swarms with millions upon millions of tiny bugs chomping at the very foundations of the structures in which they stand.

BUT, THIS BEING CAPITOL HILL, OUR neighbors came to the rescue. "Talk to Pat and Bill, in the gray house across the street," our landlady suggested. "They're really happy with their termite people." I knocked on their door. Though he'd never met me before, Pat invited me in. He happily described, in detail, his termite-extermination service and how pleased he was with the results. We are now looking forward to a blissful, termite-free future.

AND, EVEN MORE REMARKABLY, perhaps murder-free as well. Myers's article notwithstanding, crime in the neighborhood is, amazingly, decreasing. The most current statistics show that by the end of March, not a single homicide or rape had occurred in our area this year (in 1999 there were two murders and one rape during the same period). Crime rates were down in every category except three: thefts, thefts from cars, and stolen cars—a clear sign of gentrification. Good news. Or is it?

RUTH FRANKLIN

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By donating a former plant site to the Cactus Playa Lake Project, Phillips Petroleum helped expand and protect the habitat of hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. The project resulted from the cooperative effort of Phillips, wildlife and conservation agencies and the community of Cactus, Texas. Now bald eagles, waterfowl and dozens of other bird species have a better place to rest along the Central Flyway. It's yet another example of what it means to be The Performance Company.

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For a copy of our annual report, call 918-661-3700, write to: Phillips Annual Report, B-41, Adams Bldg., Bartlesville, OK 74004, or visit us at www.phillips66.com.

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